



GLOBAL TRAINING
NETWORK

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Part 3

Biblical doctrines of
Angels and Demons,
the Church,
and Last Things.

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Dear Friends,

Foundations of the Christian Faith, Part 3 is an 7-lesson course on theology designed for training global pastors and church leaders. The goal of the course is to provide an overview of three major subjects in Systematic Theology. These include the Doctrines of Angels/Demons, the Church, and Last Things. The focus of these lessons is practical. It is my hope that, in studying these doctrines, students will see the roots of their faith today and find many practical applications to their own spiritual lives and ministries. I trust you will find this to be a valuable tool in helping others to establish a good foundation for their overall worldview.

Throughout the course there are training tips, class activities and discussion questions that will help keep the training interactive. Please feel free to make this your own by adapting the material suited to your own teaching style and particular training situations.

Thank you for your vital work in equipping, encouraging, and empowering the next generation of global Christian leaders.

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Lesson 1: Good Angels

Lesson Overview

Theme

In this lesson we will explore the origin and nature of all angels. We will focus in particular on good (or “holy, elect”) angels considering their organization, work, and destiny.

Scripture

Hebrews 1:14

Objectives

- Knowledge
 - Understand the origin and nature of angels.
 - Understand the organization, work, and destiny of good angels.
- Attitudes
 - Develop an awareness of the unseen world of angels.
 - Develop an appreciation for the work of good angels in human history and in the lives of believers today.
- Actions
 - Identify areas in which we might pray for the ministry of good angels in various human circumstances.
 - Develop a lesson or sermon to teach about the ministry of good angels.

Introduction

There is an unseen realm all around us occupied by beings with great power and abilities. These beings are called angels. The Bible offers us glimpses into their world. While this realm is unseen, it is highly relevant to our lives. Like humans, some angels have chosen to rebel against God so that in the spiritual realm of which I speak, there is a conflict between good and evil, which in some way mirrors and relates to the war between good and evil in the world we see. In these lessons we will explore what the Bible reveals about the angelic realm.

If one accepts the biblical revelation, then there can be no question about the existence of angels. There are three significant characteristics about this revelation. First, it is extensive. The Old Testament speaks about angels more than 100 times, while the New Testament mentions them 165 times. Second, angels are mentioned throughout the Bible. The truth about them is not confined to one period of history or specific writers. Their existence is mentioned in 34 books of the Bible from Genesis through Revelation. Third, the teaching of the Lord includes a number of references to angels as real beings. So, to deny their existence is to cast doubt on His veracity.

Our first lesson will focus on the angels who have not rebelled against God. These are the good angels.

Scripture Discovery: Hebrews 1:14

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

- What do you see when you read or hear the words, “ministering spirits”?
- If angels are ‘sent out,’ who sent them?
- Who are the ‘heirs of salvation’?
- What do angels do when they minister to the heirs of salvation?

ACTIVITY: What do we know about Good and Evil Angels

Divide the class into small groups. Half of the groups will make a list of all they know about good or holy angels and the other half will focus on what they know about evil or fallen angels. Us the chart below to record your notes and be prepared to summarize for the class.

Good or Holy Angels	Evil or Fallen Angels (Demons)

Teaching Summary: The Origin and Nature of Angels

The Origin of Angels

The Bible everywhere assumes the existence of both good and evil angels. Their creation is hinted at in Colossians 1:16, which tells us that Jesus is the creator of all things including “thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities,” a reference to the angelic realm.

All angels must have been created before the seventh day of creation, for we read, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them” (Gen 2:1, understanding “host” to be the heavenly creatures that inhabit God’s universe).

They were almost certainly created before the earth since Job 38:6-7 says that “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” at the time when God laid the “cornerstone” of the earth and sunk its “bases” in the process of forming or founding it. If the angels (“the sons of God”) shouted for joy when God was making the earth inhabitable, this could imply that God created angelic beings early on the first day.

However, we only have what Scripture explains, so we must remain content with the fact that God has not given us much information about the time of creation of angels. Sometime before Satan tempted Eve in the garden (Gen 3:1), a number of angels sinned and rebelled against God (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). This event occurred apparently after the sixth day of creation when “God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31), but beyond this, Scripture gives us no further information.

The Bible is also clear that angels are extremely numerous (Matthew 26:53; Revelation 5:11).

The Nature of Angels

- The Bible gives little specific evidence about the original state of the angels, though we know that when God finished His work of Creation He pronounced everything to be good. Jude 6 also indicates that originally all the angels were holy creatures. Some were elect (1 Timothy 5:21) and others sinned (2 Peter 2:4). Presumably all might have remained in that original state of holiness, and those who did not rebel were confirmed forever in their holy state. Those who rebelled are now confirmed eternally in their evil, rebellious state.
- Angels are NOT glorified human beings. Matthew 22:30 says that we will be “like” angels with respect to marriage (Thiessen, 1949). It does NOT say that we will BE angels. Throughout the Bible, we see that angels are clearly distinct from humans (Hebrews 12:22-23; Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 1:14; I Corinthians 6:3).
- Angels are spiritual beings, sometimes called “winds” and “spirits” (Hebrews 1:7, 14; Ephesians 6:12). As spirits, angels do not have permanent physical bodies; however, they have often revealed themselves temporarily in bodily form as they carry out God’s work (Luke 1:26; Hebrews 13:2).
- Angels do not marry or reproduce, nor do they ever die (Matthew 22:30, Luke 20:34-36). This would suggest that angels do not have the kind of family relationships that exist among human beings. Scripture is otherwise silent on this point, so it is wise not to attempt to engage in speculation. However, the wicked angels will be punished in a place of separation from God (Matthew 25:41; Luke 8:31).

- Some (but not all) angels fell into sin (2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:4). Therefore, it seems that angels sinned individually and not corporately as did the human race through Adam.
- Angels have greater knowledge than humans but are NOT omniscient (Luke 4:34). While superior to humans in wisdom and knowledge, angels do not possess ALL knowledge (Matthew 24:36; 1 Peter 1:11-12). This is reserved for God alone.
- Angels are stronger than humans (Psalm 103:20; Acts 12:7; Matthew 28:2). However, they are NOT omnipotent. The ongoing warfare between good and evil angels indicates that their strength is limited (Revelation 12:7; Daniel 10:13; 2 Peter 2:11). At least for the time of their earthly existence, human beings are made “lower than the angels” (Heb 2:7). When the Lord returns, we will be raised to a position higher than that of angels (1 Cor 6:3) and we will rule over them.
- Angels are more mobile than humans but NOT omnipresent. They have the ability to move about with greater ease and speed than human beings (Job 1:7). Like humans, they are sometimes delayed in their travels (Daniel 10:10-14). Scripture nowhere indicates angels are omnipresent like God.

Questions

- What application do you make from the fact that there is conflict in the spiritual realm between good and evil angelic beings?
- Have you had a remarkable rescue from physical or other kinds of danger and wondered if angels were involved in helping you at that time?
- How can the example of angels who joyfully and faithfully perform their assigned tasks, whether great or small, be of help to you live out God’s calling in your life?
- Should prayer or worship be offered directly to angels? Why or why not?
- How do you think you will feel when God asks you to judge angels (1 Cor 6:3)? Explain what the Bible tells us about the greatness of our humanity as created in the image of God.

Teaching Summary: Categories and Organization of Angels

Though Scripture does not give us a figure for the number of angels God created, it is apparently a very large number (Deut. 33:2; Psalm 68:17; Heb 12:22; Rev 5:11). There appears to be no increase or decrease in the number of angels that were created.

Angels may be broadly grouped into two categories: good angels and evil angels. However, there are other categories mentioned in Scripture which help us to understand their various functions. Angels are also described using terminology which hints at an organizational plan among both good and evil angels.

Angels

The word “angel” in both Hebrew and Greek means “messenger.” This appears to be the most general term used to describe these beings (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 5:11; Psalm 68:17; Matthew 26:53).

Cherubim

The word “cherub” (singular of the plural ‘cherubim’) means “to cover” or “to guard.” A cherub guarded the way to the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24). Two images of cherubim were positioned on top of the ark in the tabernacle and temple (Exodus 25:17-22; I Kings 6:23-28). Cherubim in some way support and guard the throne of God (Psalm 18:10; 80:1; 99:1).

Seraphim

Seraphim lead all of heaven in worshipping the Lord and purify his servants in preparation for worship (Isaiah 6:2-7). The word means “fiery or burning”. They act as attendants at the throne of God and agents of cleansing. Their duty was to continually worship God and call to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Is 6:3). Their description suggests a six-winged humanlike creature. The word may be derived from the root meaning “to burn” or possibly from a root which means “to be noble”.

The Living Creatures

Some identify the Living Creatures as seraphim, others with cherubim (Hoyt, 1966). However, it seems best to identify them as a separate class of angels because they seem to have a somewhat different function. In addition to ministering around the throne of God like cherubim and seraphim (Ezek 1:5-14; Revelation 4:6-8), they help to direct the judgments of God and are witnesses to the worship of the 144,000 before his throne (Revelation 14:3). With their appearances like a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle, they are the mightiest representatives of various parts of God’s entire creation (wild beasts, domesticated animals, human beings, and birds), and they worship God continually (Rev 4:8).

The Archangels

We do not know the exact number of archangels; however, Michael is the only one named in the Bible. Michael has authority over other angels (Revelation 12:7). He is called a “great prince” and is charged with the protection of Israel (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1). Other duties of archangels have involved protecting the Christ child from Satan (Matthew 2:13). An archangel will also herald the rapture of the church (I Thessalonians 4:16-18).

The Watchers

These are angels sent with the task of observing. They are also involved in bringing a message from God to man (Daniel 4:13, 17). The term 'watchers' may refer to either a class of angels or a particular assignment given to angels.

Sons of God

The book of Job calls angels, including Satan, "sons of God" (Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7). They are sons of God in the sense of having been created by God.

Organization among the angels

Angels appear to work within an organizational framework. Colossians 1:16 refers to "thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities." These terms do not represent categories of angels but seem to indicate levels of authority or placement within an organizational plan. This same terminology is used of evil angels (Ephesians 6:12).

The Angel of the Lord

This often-used Old Testament phrase does not refer to ordinary angels. It refers to a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. Christ, though not an "angel," is nevertheless a "messenger" as the living "Word" of God (John 1:1). Here are a few examples of references to "the Angel of the Lord".

- Genesis 16:7-13 (Hagar)
- Genesis 18:1-33 (3 visitors)
- Genesis 22:11-18 (Abraham)
- Genesis 31:1-13 (Jacob)
- Exodus 3:2-5 (Moses)
- Numbers 22:22-35 (Balaam)
- Judges 2:1-5 (Joshua)
- Joshua 5:13-15 (Joshua)
- Judges 6:11-23 (Gideon)
- 1 Kings 19:5-7 (Elijah)

Questions

- Since the word 'Angel' simply means 'messenger,' what does this tell you about the role and responsibility of pastors in preaching and teaching?
- Since angels are mighty beings but not gods, nor made in God's image as humans are, what should our attitude be toward angels?

Teaching Summary: The Work of Angels

The work of God's holy angels may be loosely divided into two categories: The work of angels concerning Jesus, and the work of angels in general.

Angels ministered to Jesus Christ

The ministry of Jesus powerfully affirms the existence and work of angels.

- Angels carried out ministries in connection with the prediction and announcement of Jesus' birth (Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:8-15).
- They also ministered to him during his temptations in the wilderness and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43).
- They also served in various ways in connection with his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (Matthew 26:53; 28:2-7; Acts 1:10).
- Angels will accompany him when he returns (Matthew 16:27; 25:31).

Angels have general tasks

- They constantly worship God (Psalm 148:2; Matthew 18:10).
- They protect God's people (Genesis 19:11; Daniel 3:28; Acts 5:19).
- They guide and strengthen God's servants (Matt. 28:5-7; Acts 8:26).
- They interpret God's will to men (Acts 10:3-8). (Peter, dream, Cornelius)
- They carry out God's judgments (Genesis 19:13; 2 Samuel 24:16). (Sodom and Gomorrah)
- They carry the saved home after physical death (Luke 16:22). (rich man and Lazarus)

Angels will be involved in future events

- An archangel will announce the rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- Angels will carry out God's judgments during the Tribulation (Revelation 7:2; 16:1).
- Fearsome angels will accompany Christ Jesus when he returns (2 Thessalonians 1:7; Jude 14).
- Angels will gather the elect at Christ's return (Matthew 24:31).
- They will separate true believers from false ones (Matthew 13:39).
- They will protect the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12).

Cautions regarding our relationship to angels

- Beware of false doctrine from angels (Gal 1:8; 2 Cor 11:14).
- Do not worship angels, pray to them, or seek them!
 - Worship of angels was one of the false doctrines taught at Colossae (Col 2:18).
 - The angel told John in the book of Revelation not to worship him (Rev 19:10).
 - There is no example in Scripture of anyone praying to any specific angel or asking angels for help.
 - Our role is to talk to the Lord, who is himself the commander of all angelic forces. However, it would not seem

wrong to ask God to fulfill his promise in Psalm 91:11 to send angels to protect us in times of need.

Do angels appear to people today?

There seems to be no compelling reason to rule out the possibility of angelic appearances today. However, we should use extreme caution in receiving guidance from an angel should such an unusual event happen today. The fact that demons can appear as angels of light (2 Cor 11:14) should warn us that the appearance of any angel-like creature does not guarantee that this being speaks truthfully. Scripture is our guide, and no angelic creature can give authoritative teaching that is contrary to Scripture (Gal 1:8).

Questions

- If God made angels ministering spirits, what are some of the ways that angels minister to people?
- Why do you suppose angels remain mostly unseen in the present age?

Teaching Summary: The Destiny of Good Angels

Angels will apparently minister throughout eternity in much the same way they do now. They minister in the New Jerusalem which will be an eternal city (Revelation 21:1, 12). They are sent to minister to those who are heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14 KJV). There is no indication that this ministry ever ceases.

Lesson Summary

All angels have been individually created by God. They have great power and ability. Their purpose is to minister before God in various ways and to carry out his decrees on earth. Some have remained true to God while others have rebelled. Among the good angels, their functions vary but much of their work on earth involves ministering to the heirs of salvation.

Lesson 2: Demons

Lesson Overview

Theme

In this lesson, we will explore the origin of demons, as well as how they are classified and organized. We will consider their work and their ultimate destiny.

Scripture

I Peter 5:8

Objectives

- Knowledge
 - Know the origin of demons and its relevance to our own spiritual lives.
 - Know the work of demons and how they affect the lives of believers.
- Attitudes
 - Develop a proper perspective concerning the function of demons in spiritual warfare.
 - Learn not to fear demons but to rely upon the power of prayer and the Holy spirit in spiritual warfare.
- Actions
 - Develop lesson plans or sermons on the subject of demons.
 - Offer reassurance and help to those struggling with demonic issues.

Introduction

The existence of demons is widely accepted by Christians. But what are they? How much power do they hold? Should we fear them? Should we ignore them? We will explore these and other important issues in this lesson.

Scripture Discovery: I Peter 5:8

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

- What comes to mind when you hear that our adversary is like a 'roaring lion'?
- How does he "devour?"
- What does it mean to be "sober-minded" and "watchful?"
- How do we "resist the devil" (James 4:7)?

Teaching Summary: The Fall of Angels

When God created the world, he “saw everything that he made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). This means that even the angelic world that God had created did not have evil angels or demons in it at that time. But by the time of Genesis 3, we find that Satan, in the form of a serpent, was tempting Eve to sin (Gen 3:1-5). Therefore, sometime between the events of Gen 1:31 and Gen 3:1, there must have been a rebellion in the angelic world with many angels turning against God and becoming evil.

Why did they fall?

Demons, or fallen angels, were created as good beings. Satan was created perfect and beautiful (Ezekiel 28:15). However, led by Satan, some of the angels rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven as a result (Ezekiel 28:15-17; Revelation 12:4). This was the fall of angels into evil. Their sin seems to have been pride, a refusal to accept their assigned place, for they “did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling” (Jude 6). Satan also lured a third of the remaining angels to follow him (Revelation 12:4) and led Adam, the head of the human race, to rebel against God (Genesis 3).

Views on the origin of demons

They are spirits of wicked, deceased people

This view seems to come from the ancient Greek belief about demons as being the disembodied spirits of deceased people. It has no support in Scripture since the Bible always places the unsaved dead as confined in a place of torment, unable to return to roam the earth (Ps 9:17; Luke 16:23; Rev 20:13).

They are disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamic race

This view understands Satan as originally ruling over a perfect earth, a pre-Adamic race of people. When Satan sinned against God, this race of people were somehow involved in his rebellion. They lost their bodies and became disembodied spirits or demons. Nowhere does the Bible hint at the existence of a pre-Adamic race. Indeed, the Lord declared that Adam was the first man (Matthew 19:4). Also, the Bible nowhere indicates that deceased people are free to return to earth.

They are fallen angels

This view states that demons are angels who rebelled with Satan. Satan is designated as the prince of demons (Matt 12:24), indicating him as their leader. Satan, is an angel, thus the demons must be angels. They are fallen like Satan. In several places demons are called spirits (unclean), which associates them with the spirit world of angels, not humans (Matt 17:18; Mark 9:25; Luke 10:17-20).

What does their fall mean to us?

The fall of angels had serious consequences.

- Fallen angels lost their original holiness and became corrupt in nature and conduct (Eph 6:11-18).
- Adam was influenced by Satan. As a result, all creation was cursed because of sin (Genesis 3).
- Fallen angels continue to oppose the works of God, especially those works accomplished through his holy angels (Daniel 10:12 and following; Revelation 12:7-9).
- Fallen angels oppress human beings and oppose God's human servants (I Peter 5:8).
- In the end, they will be cast into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; 2Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 20:1-3, 10).

Questions

- What caused the angels to follow Satan in his rebellion?
- Can fallen angels be saved? Why or why not?
- Should we be afraid of fallen angels? Why or why not?

Teaching Summary: The Classification and Description of Fallen Angels

It is possible to classify demons under the same categories as holy angels. However, those classifications are largely meaningless for fallen angels. Satan surely does not wish us to know how his armies are organized. Were God to describe it, Satan would doubtless change it. Thus, the classification of demons is mysterious. However, there are some distinctions and descriptions which are useful.

Some fallen angels are imprisoned

Some fallen angels are kept in confinement awaiting judgment (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The nature of the sin which has caused this imprisonment is unclear.

Why are some imprisoned now?

Some suggest the unnatural sin of Genesis 6:2-4 committed by some of the fallen angels (called “sons of God” in the passage) caused their confinement. Though angels do not reproduce after their kind, they may have been permitted to cohabit with human women on this one occasion to produce human offspring. If this is the case, the human partners in this sin, of course, perished in the Flood.

It is unlikely that Genesis 6:2-4 refers to the fall of demons. Angels are nonmaterial beings and according to Jesus do not marry (Matt 22:30), facts that cast doubt on the idea that “the sons of God” are angels who married human wives. Nothing in the context of Genesis 6 indicates that the “sons of God” should be understood to be angels. It is far more likely that the phrase “sons of God” refers to people belonging to God, and like God, walking in righteousness (possibly marking the beginning of the line of Seth in Genesis 4:26). The text in chapter 5 traces the descendants from God through Adam and Seth to many “sons”. The larger purpose of the narrative seems to be to trace the parallel development of the godly (ultimately messianic) line of Seth and the ungodly descendants of the rest of mankind. Therefore. The “sons of God” in Genesis 6:2 are men who are righteous in their imitation of the character of their heavenly Father, and the “daughters of men” are the ungodly wives whom they marry.

Most fallen angels are free

Most evil angels remain free and are actively opposing the works of God. Satan leads them (Revelation 12:7-9). They apparently retain the relative power with which they were created (Ephesians 1:21) and function as the enemy of every Christian (Ephesians 6:12).

Fallen angels are referred to as demons

“Demons” is the most common word describing angels who have fallen (Matthew 8:16). They are also called “unclean spirits” (Mark 9:20).

The activity of demons is limited by God

Ultimately God sets limits which demons cannot exceed (Matthew 8:29; Job 1:12; 2:6).

The leader of the fallen angels is Satan

Many debate whether Ezekial 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-17 provide more background into the nature of Satan and his sin. These passages do speak about the king of Tyre and the fall of the king of Babylon. It is not unusual though for prophetic passages to refer both to a historical person of that day and also to someone else who fully fulfills the prophecy. This is true of many passages that relate both to King David and Jesus Christ. It is also true of the reference to the prince of the kingdom of Persia in Daniel 10:13, a reference that must include a superhuman being related to the kingdom of Persia.

What might we learn about the origin, nature and sin of Satan from Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-17?

Ezekiel 28:11-19

Isaiah 14:12-17

Satan has many names and descriptions in the Bible.

- The name 'Satan' (I Chronicles 21:1) means "**adversary.**"
- He is also called **the devil** (Matthew 13:39). This New Testament description is used in connection with his **slander** and **accusations against believers.**
- Satan is **the dragon** of Revelation 12:3.
- He is also called **the serpent** (Genesis 3:1) because of his **deceitfulness.** He is the **Father of lies** (John 8:44).
- He is called **Beelzebub** (Matthew 10:25), meaning "**lord of dung.**"
- He is called **Belial** (2 Corinthians 6:15) meaning "**worthless one.**"
- He is also called **Lucifer** (Isaiah 14:12). This may have been Satan's original name since it means "**light bearer**" or "**son of the morning**". However, since his fall, he can only **masquerade as an angel of light** (2 Corinthians 11:14).
- He is rightly described as **the evil one** (Matthew 13:19).
- He is also **the tempter** (Matthew 4:3).
- He is described as **the god of this world** (2Corinthians 4:4). He is the **prince of the power of the air** (Ephesians 2:2). He is the **ruler of this world** (John 12:31).

Questions

- What lesson do you take from the fact that the activities of Satan and his demons are limited by God?
- What do the descriptions of Satan tell you about his efforts to oppose you?
- How does one resist Satan's deceptions and temptations?

Teaching Summary: The Work of Fallen Angels

The work of Satan

In addition to leading the evil angels, Satan's own direct work is suggested by his titles and descriptions. He currently has power, a throne, and great authority (Matthew 4:8). He seeks to extend this power to take the place of God. He opposes God's plan at every turn, tempting humans in the garden, seeking to destroy his people, and attempting to destroy the Messiah. Satan now attacks God's servants. We should be aware of his methods.

The work of demons

Demons actively oppose the work of God wherever they can do so.

- They try to separate believers from Christ (Romans 8:38).
- They oppose angels (Daniel 10:12 and following).
- They carry out the orders and plans of Satan (Matthew 25:41).
- They cause physical and mental disorders (Matthew 9:33 et al).
- They lead people into moral impurity (Matthew 10:1).
- They spread false doctrines (I Timothy 4:1-2).
- They pervert God's Word (Genesis 3:1; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).
- They oppose the spiritual progress of believers (Ephesians 6:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:18).
- They can possess humans or animals (Mark 5:8-14).
- They deceive humans (2 Corinthians 11:3).
- They are sometimes used by God in carrying out his purposes. Judas under Satan's influence, betrayed Jesus (Luke 22:3). This led to the cross and Satan's ultimate defeat by God.

ACTIVITY: SATAN'S SCHEMES

Ask students to count off 1-11 then gather into groups based on their number. Assign each group one of the methods of Satan below. Ask the groups to describe their particular method of Satan. For example, he tempts through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, etc.

Ask them for specific examples.

The temptation of Jesus is an example as Satan offered Jesus dominion of the earth without the need of going to the cross.

1. Tempting (Matt. 4:1)	4. Lying (John 8:44)	7. Robbing (Matt. 13:19)	10. Harassing (2 Cor. 12:7)
2. Hindering (I Thess. 2:18)	5. Sifting (Luke 22:31)	8. Imitating (Matt 13:25)	11. Accusing (Rev. 12:10)
3. Striking with disease (Luke 13:16)	6. Possessing (Mark 9:17-18)	9. Killing & Devouring (John 8:44)	

Write down your notes to summarize with the class.

We are not ignorant of his schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11), but we must be sober and alert to resist him (James 4:7; I Peter 5:8). We should not speak lightly of him (Jude 8). But fight him using the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:11).

Questions

- Can Satan possess believers or only unbelievers? How do you know?
- How do you deal with a demon possessed person?
- How can you increase your effectiveness in fighting against the devil and his schemes?
- If Satan is indeed a defeated foe, why does he have so much power and influence?

Teaching Summary: Our Relationship to Demons

“If Scripture gives us a true account of the world as it really is, then we must take seriously its portrayal of intense demonic involvement in human society. Our failure to perceive that involvement with our five senses simply tells us that we have some deficiencies in our ability to understand the world, not that demons do not exist. There is no reason to think that there is any less demonic activity in the world today than there was at the time of the New Testament. The unwillingness of modern society to recognize the presence of demonic activity today is, from a biblical perspective, simply due to people’s blindness to the true nature of reality.”

(Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology)

But what kind of activity do demons engage in today? Are there some distinguishing characteristics that will enable us to recognize demonic activity when it occurs? Many of these thoughts are shared in Wayne Grudem’s book, *Systematic Theology, chapter 20: Satan and Demons*.

- **Not all evil and sin is from Satan and demons.**

The emphasis of New Testament teaching is on telling believers not to sin and to live righteous lives. Whether it be covetousness, divisions, sexual immorality, lawsuits among believers, or some other category of sin, the response was not to rebuke a spirit greed, envy, dissension, lust, or selfishness but rather to examine yourself, confess sin, repent and walk in obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When proclaiming the gospel, occasionally Paul would cast out a demonic spirit that was causing significant hindrances to the gospel in a certain area. But this was not the usual pattern of ministry presented throughout the Bible. In no instance does anyone in the New Testament summon a territorial spirit, demand information from demons about a local demonic hierarchy, or declare that demonic strongholds over a city have to be broken before the gospel can be proclaimed with effectiveness. Rather, Christians just preach the gospel.

The New Testament leads us to understand that there is some degree of demonic influence in nearly all wrongdoing and sin that occurs today. Not all sin is caused by Satan or demons, nor is the major influence or cause of sin demonic activity, But demonic activity is probably a contributing factor in almost all sin and destructive activity that opposes the work God.

If there is a pattern of persistent sin in the life of a Christian, the primary responsibility for that sin rests with the individual Christian and his or her choices to continue that wrongful pattern. There could possibly be some demonic influence contributing to and intensifying that sinful tendency. If after prayer and repeated efforts to overcome an area of sin, the believer may consider whether a demonic attack or influence could be contributing to this situation and hindering his or her effectiveness for the Lord.

- **Can a Christian be demon possessed?**

The term “demon possession” must be defined. This term is not in the Bible. The biblical accounts state that a person “has a demon” or that they are suffering from demonic influence (daimonizomai). The language never suggests that a demon actually “possesses” someone. Using the term “demon possession” implies that the person under attack has no choice but to succumb to it and will be completely under the domination of the evil spirit. This may have been the case in extreme cases, but this was not necessarily the norm. A better term may be that a person is “demonized” or under attack or battling varying degrees of demonic influence.

Can a Christian be completely controlled by an evil spirit? The answer is no.

Can a Christian experience differing degrees of demonic attack or influence? The answer is yes.

- **How can demonic influence be recognized?**

In severe cases of demonic influence as reported in the gospels, the affected person would exhibit bizarre and often violent actions, especially in opposition to the preaching of the gospel (Mark 1:23-24; Mark 9:17-22; Mark 5:2-5)

Sometimes Christians may have a subjective sense of the presence of an evil spiritual influence. In addition, someone who is under spiritual attack from a demonic power may know it or sense it. It may be helpful to ask the person, "Do you think that an attack by any evil spiritual force could be a factor in this situation?"

- **Jesus gives all believers authority to rebuke and command them to leave.**

Through the cross, Jesus disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him (Col 2:15). Because of Christ's death on the cross, our sins are completely forgiven, and Satan has no rightful authority over us.

Second, our membership as children in God's family is the firm spiritual position from which we engage in spiritual warfare. We have no need to fear demons (1 John 4:4; 2 Tim 2:7; Phil 1:28; Eph 6:16; 2 Cor 10:4; 1 John 5:18).

Does God want us to speak directly to a demon who is troubling someone rather than just praying and asking God to drive away the demon? Consider these situations ...

- Should we just pray for an unsaved person to respond to the gospel or do we also share the gospel with them?
- Should we just pray for a discouraged person or do we take the time to also encourage them?
- Should we just pray for the person involved in sin or do we speak a word of rebuke or admonition?

In each case, God has called us to be actively engaged in the world to advance His kingdom purposes.

In actual practice, this authority to rebuke demons may result in briefly speaking a command to an evil spirit to leave when we suspect the presence of demonic influence. We are to resist the devil (James 4:7), and he will flee from us. Sometimes a very brief command in the name of Jesus for the evil spirit to leave and not return will be enough. At other times it will be helpful to quote Scripture in the process of commanding an evil spirit to leave.

- **Appropriate use of the Christian's authority in ministry to other people.**

Do not frighten people due to the fact that they may be unfamiliar with spiritual attack. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of gentleness and peace (1 Cor 14:33). It may be helpful to ask questions about whether they think an evil spirit may be attacking them or if you may pray a word of rebuke over any evil spirit that may be a factor.

If the person gives permission to do so, a brief command should be spoken aloud, telling the evil spirit to leave. You may ask if the person felt or sensed anything different when those words were spoken.

This does not have to be a highly dramatic or emotionally charged procedure. There is no indication in the New Testament that demons are hard of hearing, nor are there examples of such long periods of conflict in order to get a demon to leave. The power to cast out demons comes not from our own strength or the power of our own voice, but from the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20). Thus a quiet, confident, authoritative tone of voice should be sufficient.

If the person is not a Christian, we should urge them to come to Christ as Savior immediately after the demon has been cast out so the Holy Spirit will reside in the person and protect them from future attacks (Matt 12:43-45).

The effectiveness in difficult cases of demonic influence may be related to our own spiritual condition (Matt 17:18-20; Mark 9:29; Luke 10:17, 20). Living an abiding life in Christ and walking in obedience in a continual attitude of prayer will result in a spiritual preparedness to effectively confront demonic attack or influence.

- **We should expect the gospel to come in power to triumph over the works of the devil!**

If we really believe the scriptural testimonies of the existence and activities of demons (Luke 4:41; Acts 8:7; Acts 26:18; 1 Cor 2:4-5; 2 Cor 10:3-4), and if we really believe that “the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8), then it would seem appropriate to expect that even today when the gospel is proclaimed to unbelievers, when prayer is made for believers who have perhaps been unaware of this dimension of spiritual conflict, there will be genuine triumph over the power of the enemy. We should expect that this is a normal part of the work of Christ in building up his kingdom, and rejoice in Christ’s victory in it.

Questions

- Are there any areas of sin in your life now that might give a foothold to some demonic activity? If so, what would the Lord have you do with respect to this sin?
- Are there cases where you have had victory over some demonic force by speaking to it in the name of Jesus?
- How can the material in these lessons help you to be more effective in confronting spiritual conflict?
- What are the dangers of becoming too interested in or too deeply involved in this kind of ministry? How can you protect yourself against this excessive emphasis?

Teaching Summary: The Destiny of Evil Angels

The destiny of demons

Believers will have a role in judging demons (I Corinthians 6:3). All evil angels (those free as well as those now imprisoned) will be cast into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41).

The destiny of Satan

Satan will have a role in future events attempting, as always, to overthrow God’s work. However, he will not succeed. Satan will be cast into “the abyss” (Revelation 20:1-3), where he will be bound for a thousand years. He will then be set free for a brief time during which he will lead mankind’s final rebellion against God (Revelation 20:3, 7-9). But his plans will be thwarted when fire from heaven consumes his armies and he himself is cast into the lake of fire with his demons for all eternity (Revelation 20:7-10).

Lesson Summary

Satan and his demons must be taken seriously. They are powerful beings bent on destroying God's works and believers. They accomplish this destructive work chiefly by means of fear and deception. However, Satan is a defeated foe! We need not fear him or his demons. If we resist him, he will flee. We resist him by fleeing temptations, by fighting lies with truth, and by claiming the name and authority of Jesus Christ in whom we stand. No demon can own a Christian since we already belong to Christ. We need only to combat Satan's lies with these truths to resist him and cause him to flee.

Closing Thoughts

- Satan is a defeated foe (John 12:31).
- Jesus destroyed the work of the devil (Col 2:14-15; 1 John 5:18).
- We are victorious in Christ (1 Cor 15:55-58).
- We have the power to resist Satan (1 John 4:4).
- We must learn to continually "put on the full armor of God" in daily living (Eph 6:13-17).
- There is an invisible world that is just as real as the visible world (2 Kings 6:8-23).
- We are involved in an invisible war, a cosmic conflict, that has eternal consequences (2 Cor 4:4; 1 Peter 5:8).
 - Personal life (Eph 4:26-27)
 - Marriage/Family (1 Cor 7:5)
 - Church life/False Teaching (1 Tim 4:1)
 - Culture (Dan 10; Eph 2:2; Jude 9; Rev 12 :7)
- Our foe is formidable, and his goal is to kill, steal, discredit, and destroy the cause of Christ (1 Peter 5:8; Jude 9).
- Respect our foe, be aware of his schemes, but do not fear him (Eph 6:11; 2 Cor 2:10-11).
- We fight from a position of victory not for victory (Col 2:9-15; Eph 4:7-10; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:4-5; James 4:6-10; Rev 12:11).

Lesson 3: The Church – Its Nature and Purpose

Lesson Overview

Theme

In this lesson, we will explore the nature of the church considering the metaphors used to describe it. We will also deal with the purposes for which the church exists. Finally, we will consider the various ways in which grace is expressed in and through the church.

Scripture

Ephesians 3:8-10

Objectives

- Knowledge
 - Understand more clearly the nature and purposes of the church.
 - Understand the role and manifestations of grace in the church.
- Attitudes
 - Appreciate the complex nature of the church.
 - Develop a greater commitment to the purposes of the church.
 - Desire to express grace in greater ways in the church.
- Actions
 - Develop lesson plans or sermons on the subject of the church.
 - Create a plan for more effective use of gifts to manifest grace in the church.

Introduction

The theology of the church is very important, since the church is the primary means by which God is working in the world today! What is the church? What is its purpose? How should it function? How should believers function within it? We will begin to explore these questions in this lesson.

Scripture Discovery: Ephesians 3:8-10

⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

- According to this verse, what does God intend to accomplish through the church?
- Who are the ruling authorities in the heavenly realm?
- What does it mean to you that God has chosen the church to demonstrate his wisdom?

Teaching Summary: The Nature of the Church

Definition of the church

The word “church” is translated from the Greek word “*ekklesia*.” The word means “called out assembly” or “assembly of those who have been called out.” The church is an assembly of those whom God has called out of the world for his own purposes.

The church is the community of all true believers for all time. “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). Here the term “the church” is used to apply to all those whom Christ died to redeem, all those who are saved by the death of Christ for our sin.

We embark upon the Christian journey when we respond to God’s offer of salvation in Christ. The Bible tells us that ...

- we are “born again” [John 3:3]
- we are “made alive” [Ephesians 2:5]
- we are transferred from the “domain of darkness” into “the kingdom of his beloved son” [Colossians 1:13]
- we are forgiven of sins [Ephesians 1:7]
- we are delivered from wrath [Romans 5:9]
- we are reconciled to God [2 Corinthians 5:18]
- as Jesus put it, we pass “from death to life” [John 5:24]

Praise God that He has also placed us within a new community to grow and mature in our faith as we live our lives for His glory!

Who is the Leader of the Church?

- “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)
- ¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-21)

The Church is both INVISIBLE and VISIBLE

In its true spiritual reality as the fellowship of all genuine believers, the church is invisible. This is because we cannot see the spiritual condition of people’s hearts. We can see those who outwardly attend the church, and we can see outward evidences of inward spiritual change, but we cannot view their true spiritual state – only God can do that. “*The Lord knows those who are his*” (2 Timothy 2:19). (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*)

The invisible church is the church as God sees it.

On the other hand, the true church of Christ has a visible aspect as well.

The visible church is the church as Christians on earth see it.

The visible church includes all who profess faith in Christ and give evidence of that faith in their lives. It is understood that there will be unbelievers in local churches, some who have made a profession of faith that was not genuine, who appear to be Christians but will eventually fall away. No one can tell with certainty who those people were in the past and will be in the future. We should recognize as members of the church all who “by confession of faith, by example of life, and by partaking of the ordinances, profess the same God and Christ with us.” (John Calvin, *Institutes*)

It is not that there are two churches but that the visible community regularly contains imitation Christians whom God knows not to be real (and who could know this for themselves if they would, 2 Corinthians 13:5).

The Church is both UNIVERSAL and LOCAL

The word “church” can refer to the “universal church,” meaning all Christian believers. It can also refer to an individual local church composed of believers who are gathered in a particular place. The universal church is “the community of all true believers for all time”. The local church is “an assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to do God’s will” (Ryrie, 1972).

Metaphors for the church?

To help us understand the nature of the church, the Bible uses many different pictures and metaphors.

ACTIVITY: THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Divide the class into the same 12 groups as in the last lesson. Assign each group one of the following metaphors for the church. Ask each group to search for other references (if any) using the same description. Ask them to describe the spiritual significance of this metaphor. For example: a priest is a kind of go-between, offering sacrifices to God on behalf of the people and teaching the people God’s Word. As a holy priesthood, the church stands between God and the world. We represent God to the world as we proclaim the gospel, and we represent the world before God in prayer.

1. Family (I Tim. 5:1-2)	4. Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:32; 2 Cor. 11:2)	7. Branches on a Vine (John 15:5)	10. Olive Tree (Rom. 11:17-24)
2. Field of Crops (I Cor. 3:6)	5. God’s flock (John 10:16)	8. Harvest (Matt. 13:1-30)	11. Spiritual Temple (I Peter 2:5)
3. Holy Priesthood (I Peter 2:5)	6. God’s House (Hebrews 3:6)	9. Pillar of the Truth (I Timothy 3:15)	12. Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12-27)

Questions

Each metaphor used for “the church” can help us appreciate more of the richness of privilege that God has given us by bringing us into the church. Here are some questions to consider to make these metaphors practical to our daily lives.

- Because the church is like a **family**, how should this increase our love and fellowship with one another?
- How should the thought that the church is like a **bride** stimulate us to strive for greater purity and holiness, and also greater love for Christ and submission to Him?
- How might the image of the church as **branches in the vine** cause us to rest in Christ more fully?
- How might the idea of a **field, crop or harvest** encourage us to continue growing in the Christian life on a daily basis, taking in the proper spiritual nourishment to grow?
- Because the church is **God’s new temple**, how should this increase our awareness of His dwelling in our midst?
- With the church as a **royal priesthood**, how might we see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and service that we offer Him?
- How does the image of the church as the **body of Christ** increase our interdependence on one another and our appreciation for the diversity of spiritual gifts and abilities within the church?

Teaching Summary: The Purposes of the Church

The 3-fold purposes of the church can be described in terms of its ministry to God, to believers and to the world.

Ministry to God: Worship

The New Testament shows that that we exist individually and together as churches for the purpose of praising and bringing glory to God (Ephesians 1:12; Ephesians 5:16-19). Therefore, the church as a local group of believers has a purpose of glorifying God in corporate praise (Colossians 3:16).

Ministry to believers: Nurture/Discipleship

The New Testament also gives us insight into the purpose of the church toward believers. The Great Commission involves making disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) and teaching them in order to bring them to maturity.

- The Apostle Paul’s goal was to present everyone mature in Christ (Col. 1:28).
- The purpose of spiritual gifts is to enable ministry which results in the church being built up until it reaches the maturity appropriate for the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Ministry to the world: Evangelism and Mercy

The disciple-making work of the church cannot be carried out without the accompanying work of showing mercy.

- Although there is an emphasis on doing good for those in need within the church (Acts 11:29), the Bible also affirms the need to help unbelievers in need whether or not they respond in faith.
- This is consistent with the example of Jesus who healed people whether or not they responded in faith (Luke 4:40).
- Mercy is shown not merely to evangelize. It is done to glorify God by reflecting his merciful and loving nature.
- While not carried out for the sole purpose of evangelizing people, showing mercy is powerfully attractive and often results in evangelism.

Keeping purposes in balance

None of these purposes are more important than the others. All are commanded by God and all must be carried out. Neglecting one or more of these purposes will always result in the church limiting the affect of its calling.

Questions

- In your opinion which of these purposes tend to predominate in most local churches?
- What are some of the consequences of not providing a healthy balance in all three area?
- Which purpose(s) receive the most attention in your church?

Teaching Summary: Forms of Grace in the Church

What are “forms of grace”?

The phrase “forms of grace” refers to the ways in which believers become the instruments by which God grants different expressions of grace to others in the church and in the world (I Peter 4:10). The following is a partial list of Christian activities through which God expresses grace inside and outside the church.

Read Acts 2:41-47

Identify the “forms of grace” or elements of a healthy church that were present in this first century church.

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Teaching of the Word

Teaching the Word is an obvious means by which God demonstrates grace. All our speech should minister grace to those that hear (Ephesians 4:29). The teaching of God's word should do so even more.

Baptism

Believer's baptism is a picture of the regenerating work of God at salvation. It is a public testimony that a person has spiritually passed from one life to another. Those who are baptized find a new dynamic at work in their spiritual lives as they enter into community with other believers. Those who observe are blessed by the testimony of God changing another life.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper similarly recalls the death that Jesus died in order to give us new life. It pictures our reception of that new life and our resulting bond of unity with Jesus and one another. The Apostle Paul urges that it be accompanied by spiritual self-examination (I Corinthians 11:28). During the Lord's Supper, many sins are confessed, and many hearts brought back into tune with God's. Thus, it is a powerful means of grace.

Prayer for one another

The command to pray for one another (James 5:16) is a means by which grace is expressed. We intercede for one another and for the world. Paul urged that this be of highest priority (I Timothy 2:1-7).

Worship

The act of worshipping God is uplifting to believers. The words of the songs and prayers remind us of important truths. They may rebuke or encourage us. There is also a mysterious sense in which God himself ministers grace to us during the act of worship. God "'inhabits' the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3 KJV). Even more so, he inhabits the praises of the church since each believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit himself (I Corinthians 6:19-20)!

Church discipline

Believers are often concerned that church discipline will be divisive or present a poor testimony to the world. However, when carried out with the right spirit, it ministers grace.

- First it gives grace to the one under discipline by strongly urging him/her to repent.
- It gives grace to believers by warning them against sin and by affirming our mutual commitment to loving accountability.
- It offers grace to unbelievers who observe a church that avoids hypocrisy. Respect for God's standards and his people grow.

Giving

Paul described generous giving as, “the grace of giving.” The poor are blessed by the giving of believers to help them. The lost receive grace when a missionary brings them the gospel. The church receives grace as nurturing ministries are funded and carried out. There are many other examples.

Spiritual gifts

The very purpose of spiritual gifts is to minister grace in lots of different ways (I Peter 4:10). Every believer has benefitted in numerous ways by the spiritual gifts of others. Not only have we each received grace by this means, but we each also have numerous opportunities to show grace to others using our own spiritual gifts. The use of our own spiritual gifts not only ministers grace to others, but it inevitably blesses us too.

Fellowship

Fellowship involves all that we hold in common as believers. The word speaks of our bond as brothers and sisters in the family of God, the beliefs we share, and our interest in each other’s welfare. Fellowship involves all we do to strengthen one another, pray for one another, counsel one another, love one another, bear one another’s burdens, confess our sins one to another, etc. A mature spiritual life cannot be attained in solitude.

Evangelism

Evangelism is a very important function of a church (Matthew 28:19-20). The Great Commission is to “make disciples.” This involves all the effort leading up to evangelism and all of the ministries which lead a believer to maturity. Evangelism is part of the larger task of making disciples. The entire process is a means by which God demonstrates great grace.

Personal ministry to individuals

There are many practical ways in which a church ministers grace to the individuals in its midst. It may involve supporting widows (I Timothy 5:3- 16), counselling (Colossians 3:16), showing mercy (Galatians 6:10), or any of a hundred other ministries. In the church, those who have extra needs receive special attention (I Corinthians 12: 20-26).

Questions

- Which “form of grace” have had the biggest impact on your life?
- How do you tend to show grace to others?
- How could your church become more excellent at demonstrating grace in its various forms?

Lesson Summary

One cannot help but marvel at the complexity of the church! Its purposes encompass believers, unbelievers all over the world, and God himself. The church can be described using a wide variety of metaphors. There is an almost limitless variety of ways by which the church can and does channel God’s grace to people in need. Indeed, the exact nature of ministries in a church is as unique as the spiritual giftsets represented in the congregation.

Lesson 4: The Church – Its Purity, Unity and Power

Lesson Overview

Theme

In this lesson, we will consider some of the spiritual dynamics at work in the New Testament church.

Scripture

Ephesians 3:10

Objectives

- Knowledge
 - Understand more clearly God's design for the purity, unity and power of the church.
 - Understand the part each believer plays in the purity, unity, and power of the church.
- Attitudes
 - Appreciate the spiritual dynamics at work in the church.
 - Develop a greater commitment to the purity and unity of the church.
- Actions
 - Develop lesson plans or sermons on the purity, unity, and power of the church.
 - Create a plan to strengthen purity, unity, and power in the church.

Introduction

The spiritual dynamics of the church are very important! What is the power at work in the church? How is it affected by unity or lack of unity? How is a church affected by greater or lesser levels of personal purity in the congregation? We will explore these issues in this lesson.

Scripture Discovery: Ephesians 3:10

⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

- How is God's wisdom demonstrated when there is unity in the church?
- How does the purity of believers demonstrate God's wisdom?

Teaching Summary: The Purity of the Church

What is purity?

“The purity of the church is its degree of freedom from wrong doctrine and conduct, and its degree of conformity to God’s revealed will for the church”(Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1994).

What priority does purity have in the local church?

Some New Testament churches were purer than others. The churches at Philippi and Thessalonica were relatively free of doctrinal error or moral problems (Philippians 1:3-11; I Thessalonians 1:2-10). The same could not be said for the churches in Galatia or Corinth (Galatians 1:6-9; I Corinthians 3:1-4). The same is true today.

While it is important to pray and work for purity in the church, absolute purity is not possible in this life. Purity is an ideal, but progress toward purity defines the journey on which all believers are embarked. Every church is made up of people of different levels of maturity. All of us have room to grow in our understanding of biblical doctrine. Our daily questions should be, “Are the church and its members making progress in the purity of their doctrine and conduct?”

ACTIVITY: CHURCH PURITY

Divide the class into the same 12 groups as in the last two lessons. Assign each group one of the factors below. Ask them to find scriptural references supporting the importance of their assigned factor. Ask them to discuss and explain how that factor makes a church purer.

1. **Biblical Doctrine (right preaching and teaching of the Word)** (Ephesians 5:26-27; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; Titus 1:9, 11; Jude 3)
 - *How might you systematically preach/teach through the Bible over the next few years?*
 - *Would you describe your preaching style as expository (allowing the Word to guide your message) or topical (use of biblical passages to support what you plan to communicate)?*
 - *How do you equip your church to understand the core Biblical doctrine?*
 - *How do you equip others in the church to teach and disciple your members?*
2. **Proper use of the Ordinances** (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Matthew 28:18-20)
 - *Describe your process for bringing new members into your church?*
 - *What is your process for baptizing new believers?*
 - *Describe your process for the Lord’s Supper (frequency, format, theological significance).*
3. **Appropriate Church Discipline** (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:6-7, 12-13)
 - *How has your church discipline process been presented to your church members?*
 - *How effective is your discipline process in achieving restoration and reconciliation?*
 - *What changes, if any, would you like to make to your current process?*
4. **Genuine Worship** (Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16-17; Hebrews 10:24-25)
 - *Describe the level of genuine worship of God in your Sunday gatherings.*
 - *To what degree do your members live a life of worship throughout the week?*
 - *How would you assess your personal worship of God throughout the week?*

5. **Effective Prayer** (Matthew 6:5-13; Ephesians 6:18; James 5:16)
 - *Assess the health of your church's prayer ministry (strengths and areas for growth).*
 - *To what degree does your theology of prayer align with what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:5-13 (Upward in reverence to God, Downward in submission, Inward with requests and intercession, Outward in readiness claiming the power and promises of God)*
6. **Effective Witness** (Matthew 28:19-20; John 13:34-35; Acts 1:8; 2:44-47; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; 1 Peter 3:15; 1 John 4:7)
 - *Describe how you equip your church to know the Gospel and do the work of evangelism.*
 - *How do you maintain a balance between worship, equipping believers and witnessing?*
 - *To what degree do you balance your focus on your own "Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria" with as well as "the ends of the earth"?*
7. **Effective Fellowship** (1 John 4:7-12, Romans 12:1-21; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8)
 - *Describe the level of love that your church has for one another.*
 - *How do you equip your church members to discover their spiritual gifts and begin serving in their areas of giftedness?*
 - *In the next year, how would you like your church to grow in fellowship with one another?*
8. **Biblical Church Government** (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)
 - *How is the biblical principle of plurality of leadership evident in your church?*
 - *Describe your current leadership structure and how you identify potential elders and deacons.*
 - *What steps might you take in the coming year(s) to establish and/or strengthen the leadership (elders and deacons) in your church?*
9. **Spiritual Power in Ministry** (Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 4:20; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4; Ephesians 1:17-19, 5:15-20)
 - *To what degree do your members depend on the power of the Holy Spirit for life and ministry?*
 - *Describe the difference between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation and the ongoing filling of the Holy Spirit.*
 - *How would you like to see your church grow in its understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit?*
10. **Personal Holiness of Life among Members** (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Titus 2:11-12; Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 Timothy 4:7-8, Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:13-16)
 - *Describe the spiritual health and maturity of your church?*
 - *What are the primary spiritual disciplines practiced by the members of your church and where would you like to see growth?*
 - *How would you describe the desire and ability of your church to feed itself on the Bible?*
11. **Generous Stewardship** (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; Malachi 3:10)
 - *Describe the spiritual maturity level of giving within your church?*
 - *How do you develop your annual church budget and manage/report on church finances?*
 - *How can you help your church understand the biblical concept of supporting its pastor through its tithes and offerings?*
12. **Love for and Exaltation of Christ** (Ephesians 3:20-21; Titus 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:8; Revelation 2:4)
 - *To what degree do the members of your church live with Christ as the center of their lives with a growing desire to surrender all area in their lives to His Lordship.*
 - *Describe how your church demonstrates its love for Christ through the church, in their marriages and families, etc.*

In 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul calls on church leaders to pursue purity, along with “those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” Thus, leaders have the responsibility not only to pursue personal purity, but also to lead the church in this pursuit.

Questions

- In which areas is your church “more- pure” and “less-pure”?
- On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 equals less-pure; 10 equals more-pure), where would you rank your church in each category that identify a more-pure church?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

- What can you do in the coming year(s) to work toward greater purity in your church?
- What encouraging signs do you see that the church in Senegal is increasing in purity?

Teaching Summary: The Unity of the Church

Definition of church unity

“The unity of the church is its degree of freedom from divisions among true Christians” (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1994). The mandate to seek unity does not include unity with false brothers or sisters, but with true believers (Matthew 7:15).

New Testament teaching on church unity

The New Testament lays great stress on the need for unity in the church.

- Jesus desired and prayed for unity (John 17:21-23).
- Paul stressed the need for unity in Corinth (I Corinthians 1:2,10).
- He urged the Philippians to make his joy complete by means of their unity (Philippians 2:2).
- Paul commanded the *practice* of unity among the believers based on the *fact* of spiritual unity in Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-26).
- Paul warned against those who cause divisions (Romans 16:17-18).
- Paul publicly rebuked Peter for not stressing the unity between Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-14).
- Jude warns against divisive people (Jude 19).
- Direct commands to separate from others are always commands to separate from non-believers, not from Christians with whom one disagrees (2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

The unity stressed in the New Testament does not require that the church be composed of one denomination or have some kind of world-wide governance. The body of Christ is very diverse and may be well served by a variety of denominations and organizations while still maintaining unity in the Spirit. American Pastor Rick Warren says, “*It takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people*” (Warren, 2014).

Questions

- In what ways do you think that your church could grow in unity?
- In what ways do you think your church could demonstrate greater unity with other true churches in the same geographical area?
- What are the barriers to such unity?

Teaching Summary: The Power of the Church

The Church has power for spiritual warfare

The nature of the church's power is spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). This power includes:

- The power of the gospel to break through hardened opposition and change the hearts of unbelievers (Romans 1:16).
- Power to overcome demonic opposition, especially to the preaching of the gospel (Acts 13:8-11).
- Power to overcome human opposition from false brothers and hypocrites (Acts 5:1-11).
- The power to stand against the devil and his schemes (Ephesians 6:10-18).

The Church holds the keys to the kingdom

The phrase "keys to the kingdom" seems to represent the power involved in preaching the gospel (Matthew 16:19) which opens the doors to the kingdom allowing those who respond to enter.

This power is significant in the life of the church because Jesus said, "whatever you bind will be bound in heaven and whatever you loosen will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19, 18:17-19).

Power of the Church vs. the Power of the State

The power of the church and the power of the state are of a completely different nature. God grants to the state the right to take up the sword both to enforce laws and protect citizens (Romans 13:1-7). This power is never granted to the church. Jesus saw the church as having spiritual authority (John 18:36). Similarly, Paul affirmed in 2 Corinthians 10:4 that our weapons are not worldly ones.

Nowhere does Scripture allow that the power of government may be used to enforce Christian dogma on non-Christians. Jesus made a clear distinction between church and state when he indicated that we have a different kind of obligation to Caesar than to God (Matthew 22:21).

The church has power to exercise discipline

Since discipline utilizes the spiritual power given to the church, it is appropriate to consider its parameters.

What are the purposes of church discipline?

- Restore and reconcile the sinning believer (Galatians 6:1).
- Keep sin from spreading (1 Corinthians 5:1-2; Hebrews 12:15).
- Protect the honor of Christ (Romans 2:24).

For what sins should church discipline be exercised?

- Personal sin which cannot, by repeated efforts, be resolved in private (Matthew 18:15-17).
- Publicly known sins. Such as...
 - Divisiveness (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10)
 - Incest (I Corinthians 5:1)
 - Refusal to work (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10)
 - Disobedience (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)
 - Blasphemy (I Timothy 1:20)
 - Teaching heretical doctrine (2 John 10-11)

How should church discipline be carried out?

- Knowledge of the sin should be restricted where possible (Matthew 18:15-17).
- Disciplinary measures should increase until there is a solution (Matthew 18:15-17).
- Sins of church leaders should not be ignored (I Timothy 1:19-20), but carefully and privately confirmed before action is taken.
- Other aspects of church discipline.
 - There should be continuing willingness for the church to forgive in the event of repentance (2 Corinthians 2:7-8).
 - There should be a spirit of meekness in discipline (Gal. 6:1).

Questions

- What is the strongest enemy to the effective proclamation of the gospel in your community right now? Consider the lack of biblical church discipline leading to a holy witness.
- How might the power God has given to the church be used against that enemy?
- If a church refuses to carry out church discipline at all for a number of years, even though there is an evident need for it, what will be the harmful results in the church?

Lesson Summary

Spiritual dynamics such as purity, unity, and spiritual power are unseen. They frequently take on a lower priority than outward matters such as worship styles, attendance, programs, cash flow, and buildings. However, to ignore these matters is to ignore the central assets which make the church unique and effective in its God-given work. May God grant us eyes to see as he sees!

Lesson 5: The Church – Its Governance, Ordinances and Worship

Lesson Overview

Theme

In this lesson, we will consider the governance of local churches including biblical church officers and types of government. We will look at the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. We will consider their biblical meaning and their proper practice. Finally, we will review the definition and purpose of worship and consider its results in our lives and its eternal value.

Scripture

Ephesians 3:10

Objectives

- Knowledge
 - Understand the biblical officers for churches. And the latitude churches have in appointing leaders of various kinds.
 - Understand types of government commonly in use around the world today.
 - Understand the biblical meaning and mode of baptism.
 - Understand the biblical meaning and practice of communion.
 - Understand the biblical definition and purpose of worship.
 - Understand both the results and the eternal value of worship.
- Attitudes
 - Appreciate the qualifications for church leadership.
 - Develop a greater sense of tolerance for churches governed by different kinds of systems.
 - Develop a commitment to the regular practice of both church ordinances.
 - Grow in humility toward others whose practice of the ordinances differs from your own.
 - Develop a love for genuine worship.
 - Grow in appreciation for the purposes and value of worship.
- Actions
 - Develop lesson plans or sermons on church government.
 - Create a plan to address any biblical problems in the governance of the students' local church.
 - Develop a lesson plan or sermon on baptism and the Lord's Supper.
 - Create a plan to more closely follow the biblical parameters of these two ordinances in your church.
 - Develop a lesson plan or sermon on worship
 - Create a plan to strengthen worship in your church.

A. Church Governance

There are many different kinds of church government around the world today. The Bible seems to allow for a good deal of latitude here. However, some biblical guidelines are offered regarding forms of government and officers in a local church.

Scripture Discovery: Ephesians 3:10

- How is God's wisdom demonstrated in the qualifications for church leaders (see I Timothy 3)?
- How is God glorified through good leadership in a local church?
- Why might angels or demons be interested in how a church is governed?

Teaching Summary: Church Officers

A church officer is "someone who has been publicly recognized as having the right and responsibility to perform certain functions for the benefit of the whole church" (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1994). Two such officers are mentioned in Scripture and other officers seem to be allowed, although not commanded, in the Bible.

Elder (Pastor/Overseer/Bishop)

The term 'elder' refers to the broad responsibility of church leadership granted to those who demonstrate maturity and wisdom. Elders may have different leadership functions.

The Plurality of Elders

The New Testament pattern always has plural elders (Acts 14:23, 20:17; Titus 1:5). There is never an instance of a lone elder in the New Testament.

The Function of Elders

The Bible indicates that different elders carried on different functions. Specific instructions are given to elders in several areas:

- Governing (I Timothy 5:17)
- Shepherding (I Peter 5:2-5)
- Preaching/Teaching (Ephesians 4:11; I Timothy 3:2; I Timothy 5:17)

Other Titles of Elders

The differing function of elders is reflected in the various titles by which elders are frequently known. For example:

- A pastor is one kind of elder. The term 'pastor' refers to the shepherd role given to some elders. Although it only occurs once as a title (Ephesians 4:11), it occurs elsewhere as a verb. Elders are urged to 'shepherd' the flock of God (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2).
- An overseer or 'bishop' is another title used to describe a different function of elders. The term speaks of their leadership function and its inherent authority.

The Qualifications of Elders

When Paul lists the qualifications of elders, he combines requirements concerning character traits and heart attitudes with requirements that demonstrate committed and faithful Christian leadership (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). These high standards for qualification as an elder, combined with the accountability of plural elders found throughout the New Testament, create a dual protection against abuse of power or other defects of leadership.

The Meaning of “Husband of One Wife”

This phrase, like the rest of the passage, refers to a person’s character and reputation as it now exists. It means he should be a “one-woman-man.”

- This does not require that an elder be married. However, his character and his treatment of women in particular should be above reproach.
- It does not necessarily forbid divorced individuals from serving as elders. If it did, then, by the same reasoning, it would disqualify anyone who has ever failed in any area of his life.
- It would seem to exclude practicing polygamists from leadership positions as well as anyone whose reputation includes inappropriate attention to women.

Deacon

The office of deacon began with the recognition of the first set of deacons in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1-6). Deacons are mentioned again in contexts which make it clear that the office became a regular part of newly established churches all over the world (Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8-13). The latter passage lists the qualifications of deacons.

Apparently, deacons were tasked with certain administrative duties. This seems to be the reason for the institution of the office in Acts 6 where the distribution of food for the care of widows was in view.

The term deacon is used to denote the formal office in the church. However, it is also used in an informal sense to refer to those who serve the church in various ways, such as Phoebe the deaconess (Romans 16:1-2).

Some suggest that this reference means women may also hold the office of deacon or that there is an office of deaconess.

ACTIVITY: THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

With a partner, read the qualifications of elders and deacons found in I Timothy 3:1-7 and I Timothy 3:8-13. Make a list of the qualifications for each office. How might you summarize what God is looking for in the leaders of His church.

Other Offices

Many churches today include other officers (treasurer, moderator, trustees, etc.). Are these unbiblical offices? While it is true that there is no specific mention of them in the New Testament, that does not mean they are unbiblical. The example of Acts 6 shows us that when the church faced a practical problem hindering the ministry, leaders organized and set up a new office to meet the need. Churches today have freedom to do the same.

Questions

- If you are currently an officer in your church or would like to be one, does the pattern of your life match the biblical qualifications?
- If you have had a part in the process of selecting church leaders, have you tended to emphasize character traits and spiritual qualifications talked about in Scripture or have you emphasized worldly leadership qualifications?
- What other kinds of leaders do you have in your local church?
- In what way do you see church officers differently now than before this lesson?

Teaching Summary: Types of Church Government

There are at least four types of church government for local congregations.

Single elder (pastor)

This approach is common to Baptist churches among others. In this form, the pastor is seen as the only elder. He usually serves along with a group or 'board' of deacons. The amount of authority a pastor has under this system varies greatly but generally increases with the length of his tenure.

Elder-led

This type of government involves a group of elders who govern together. Pastors are part of the elder team, though with distinct pastoral functions. The lead pastor is normally the lead elder. The authority of the elders is limited by several considerations.

- They are generally elected or affirmed by the congregation.
- They frequently have limited terms.
- Large decisions are sometimes reserved for the church as a whole.
- They are subject to discipline by the congregation if needed.

Pure congregational

In this type of government, all decisions are made at the congregational level. This system becomes impractical as the church grows and more decisions are required.

No government but the Holy Spirit

With this approach, all forms of government are shunned. There are no formal decision-making processes or structures. This type of governance depends on each member of the congregation being led by the Holy Spirit and coming to consensus. This form of government fails to recognize New Testament officers and is unworkable on a practical level.

Conclusions

Many types of church government have worked well in churches of different types all over the world. Each system has strengths and weaknesses. Each type functions well only if the congregation walks in obedience to Christ. The final two types seem greatly inferior to the first two since there is no structure. The single elder model seems to ignore the New Testament practice of ordaining plural elders. On balance, the best type of church governance seems to be the plural elder model.

Questions

- What kind of government do you practice in your local church?
- How do you see its strengths and weaknesses?
- What kind of church officers should be subject to similar qualifications as deacons? As elders?
- No matter what kind of church government structure you currently have, are there ways in which you can be more encouraging and supportive of the leaders in your church?

Church Governance Summary

The careful selection of leaders is critically important to a local church. The form of government, while less critical, can nevertheless greatly strengthen the work or be a hindrance. We should consider these matters carefully.

B. Church Ordinances

In this section, we will look at the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper or communion. While both of these ordinances would seem at first glance to be utterly non-controversial, there has been a great deal of controversy in church history concerning both. Instead of building the unity of the body, disputes in these areas have sometimes caused division. It need not be so. We will look at the meaning and mode of baptism, as well as the meaning and practice of the Lord's Supper. Along the way, we will look at alternate views of each of these ordinances and consider what our attitude should be concerning churches with different practices.

Teaching Summary: Baptism

The Meaning and Mode of Baptism

The one mode of water baptism practiced and taught in the New Testament is immersion.

- The meaning of baptism is that it is a public and symbolic picture of a person being united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). It is a picture of our old unregenerate life coming to an end in death. The picture continues with our resurrection to new life in Christ. These events occur at the point of salvation. Baptism is a public picture of these events. As a secondary meaning, baptism also pictures cleansing (1 Peter 3:21)
- The meaning seems to require baptism by immersion (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12). No other mode quite fits the meaning.
- The Greek word "baptize" actually means "to immerse."
- Aligns with several New Testament passages (Mark 1:5, 10; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-39).

The Subjects of Baptism

Baptism is often called “believer’s baptism” because it pictures the events that occur when a person first believes and is converted. It is not designed for infants or a person who is not making a credible profession of faith in Christ alone for salvation. The biblical examples uniformly indicate that baptism was administered to those making a profession of faith (Acts 8:36-38 and many others).

- The practice of infant baptism is completely unknown in the Bible.
- Baptism does not replace symbolism of circumcision which carried an entirely different meaning and was only for males.
- Nor is baptism a necessary part of Christian salvation. Salvation is by grace through faith alone. Baptism is merely a picture of it.
- How old should a child be before undergoing baptism? Since, in the New Testament, water baptism is an expression of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, it would seem that a child needs to be old enough to believe. This age varies with each child.

The Effect of Baptism

Baptism provides many spiritual blessings, including:

- The blessing of God’s favor which comes with all obedience.
- The joy that comes with public profession of faith.
- The reassurance of having a clear physical picture of dying and rising with Christ and of washing away sins.
- The accountability of being a publicly known Christian.
- The strengthening of faith for those baptized and all who are witnesses.

The Necessity of Baptism

Baptism was commanded both by Jesus (Matthew 28:19) and the apostles (Acts 2:38). These commands alone make it a necessary part of our obedient response to the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, we must emphasize that, while baptism is an important step of obedience and a public testimony, it is not necessary to true salvation (Luke 23:43).

Two Practical Questions

Should churches be divided over baptism?

There are churches which practice infant baptism as well as churches which practice only believer’s baptism. Churches also practice different modes of baptism. It is important to maintain unity of the Spirit in spite of differences in the practice of baptism.

Who can baptize?

Must baptism be carried out by pastors only? The Scripture places no restrictions on the person doing the baptizing. Indeed, the New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:4-10) seems to argue that baptism can be carried out by any believer. Two practical matters suggest themselves:

- Since baptism is a sign of new life in Christ, it seems appropriate that it should be carried out by someone who is a believer.
- Baptism pictures new spiritual life. It identifies one with Christ and therefore with his church. As a practical matter, it seems appropriate that, when possible, baptism should be carried out in the presence of the church and led by someone approved by church leaders.

Questions

- Have you been baptized? How did that impact your life?
- What aspects of the meaning of baptism have you come to appreciate more because of this lesson?

Teaching Summary: The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is so called because it began with Jesus celebrating Passover with his disciples. He broke bread and offered wine explaining that they were symbolic of his body and blood (Matthew 26:26-29).

Meaning of the Lord's Supper

The meaning of the Lord's Supper is rich and profound.

Christ's death

The Lord's Supper powerfully illustrates the death of Christ. The broken bread pictures the devastating effects of crucifixion on Jesus' physical body. The cup of wine is a picture of him pouring out his life blood. Thus, this ceremony pictures the Lord's death (I Corinthians 11:26).

Our participation in the benefits of Christ's death

As we eat and drink these symbols in the Lord's Supper, it symbolizes that we have received the benefits of the Lord's death (Matthew 26:26).

Spiritual nourishment

While the bread and wine involved in the Lord's Supper offer some small amount of physical nourishment, they are designed to picture Jesus' death which nourishes our souls (John 6:53-57).

The unity of believers

When believers participate in the Lord's Supper together, they give a powerful sign of their unity (I Corinthians 10:17). We have received the benefits of Christ's death along with all other believers and are thus bound together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Christ affirms his love for me

The fact that I am invited by Christ to take part in the Lord's Supper is a powerful affirmation and reassurance that Jesus loves me personally.

I affirm my faith in Christ

By taking the Lord's Supper, we are reminded of our faith in Christ in two ways. First, it is a reminder of Christ's death for our sin. It is important therefore that we examine ourselves before participating (I Corinthians 11:28). Second, since the very symbols of his death also picture spiritual nourishment for believers, we proclaim that we have received life as a result of Jesus' death.

Participants in the Lord's Supper

Most Protestants agree that, because of the meaning of the Lord's Supper, only believers in Christ should participate.

Before a believer takes part in the Lord's Supper, they should examine themselves as to their obedience to Christ (I Corinthians 11:27-30).

Carelessness about sin is highly disrespectful of Christ's sacrifice which paid for that sin. For the same reason, we should examine ourselves before entering into ANY time of worship (Matthew 5:23-24).

Practical questions about the Lord's Supper

- Who should administer the Lord's Supper? The Bible places no restriction on who can administer this ordinance. It seems reasonable and prudent that it should be administered by someone who is respected as leader in the church.
- How often should the Lord's Supper be taken? The Scriptures are silent on this question merely commanding that it be done regularly (I Corinthians 11:26). Historically many churches have celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly during worship. However, other churches have done so less often, once-per-month being a common interval.
- Should the Lord's Supper be taken by those who are not members of the church in which it is being served? While different churches differ on this question, there is no direct New Testament teaching which commands that the Lord's Table be restricted beyond the parameters already discussed. A person should be a believer living in good conscience as one obedient to Christ.
- What should our attitude be toward people whose practice of the Lord's Supper may be different than our own? Differences in our practice of communion should never create disunity in the family of God. Therefore, humility is important as we consider those whose practice is different from our own.

Church Ordinances Summary

The practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper are important mile markers in our spiritual journey. They are both steps of obedience. Both convey spiritual benefit to those who participate. We should take these things very seriously but should never be arrogant or dismissive either in our practice of the ordinances or in our thoughts toward others who have different opinions.

C. The Church – Its Worship

Churches exist to worship. It is the most common activity of any church. In this lesson we will review the definition and purpose of worship. We will also consider its results in our lives and its eternal value. Rediscovering the biblical purposes and outcomes of worship can lead to renewal in the spiritual life of any church.

Scripture Discovery: Ephesians 3:10

- How does worship demonstrate the wisdom of God?
- What do angels see when they observe worship?
- What do demons fear about worship?
- In what ways are our lives hindered by a lack of genuine worship?

Teaching Summary: Definition and Purpose of Worship

“Worship is the activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts” (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1994). Several aspects of this definition are noteworthy:

- The definition provides the purpose of worship which is to bring glory to God in the presence of the entire spiritual realm.
- Worship is an activity. Nature glorifies God naturally (Psalm 19:1). However, in worship we have the unique opportunity of glorifying God *by choice!* This is glorifying God on a much higher level.
- Worship occurs “in his presence.” This implies a gathering in a setting where we each understand the special presence of God in that place at that time. (Matthew 18:20).
- “Voices...hearts.” Worship is corporate, not merely individual. In corporate worship, the very unity of believers lifting their voices and hearts to God glorifies him (Psalm 133). Thus, unified worship is a powerful testimony to the power of the cross.

Questions

- Can worship be individual? Have we fulfilled the entire purpose of worship by worshipping individually?
- In your experience what things interfere with a strong sense of God’s presence in worship?
- In your experience, what things interfere with unity in worship?

Teaching Summary: Results of Genuine Worship

Several desirable ends occur when we genuinely worship God together.

We delight in God

God created man to glorify him *as we take delight in him* (Psalm 16:11; 73:25). The early church enjoys much joy in worship (Acts 2:46). This joy is a foretaste of worship in heaven (Revelation 4:8).

God delights in us

God also takes delight in his created beings (Zephaniah 3:17). Corporate worship allows God to do just that.

We draw near to God

In the New Testament era, believers can draw near to God in ways Old Covenant era believers could only imagine (Hebrews 9:1-7). Because of Christ's sacrifice, we can worship with true hearts in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22). Because of Christ, our approach to God is no longer a forbidding, terrifying experience, but rather an inviting one.

God draws near to us

James tells us that when we draw near to God, he draws near to us (James 4:8). God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). The church worships with the assurance that when we humbly draw near to God, he responds by drawing near to us. Such humility is both an individual and a corporate discipline.

God ministers to us

When we worship, we learn from the Word of God and are strengthened (Hebrews 10:24-25). This is both a corporate and individual result of worship (1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 4:16).

The Lord's enemies flee

When Israel went into battle singing praises to God (2 Chronicles 20:21-22), God's enemies were defeated. Similarly, when we sing genuine praise to God in worship, we can expect that God will do battle against demonic forces opposing the gospel.

Unbelievers know they are in God's presence

While evangelism is not the main purpose of worship, Paul urges Christians to consider the presence of unsaved people and speak in ways that can be understood. Then God can use our words in the hearts of believers and unbelievers alike (1 Cor. 14:23-25).

Questions

- Have you ever experienced a strong sense of God's presence in corporate worship?
Can you describe it?
- Can you describe some of the results of that worship?
- How would you describe "false" worship of God?

Teaching Summary: The Eternal Value of Genuine Worship

When Paul urges believers to use their time wisely since the days are evil, he goes on to tell them that their lives should be characterized by genuineworship (Ephesians 5:17-20). The proper use of our limited time on earth should include deliberate praise to God and encouragement to one another. Since God is eternal, he will treasure our praise forever.

Since worship is a spiritual matter, it cannot be generated merely by carefulplanning and talented execution. Preparation for genuine worship must be done in the spiritual realm.

- There should be much prayer by leaders and participants in worshipalike (I Thessalonians 5:17).
- The congregation must also learn what the Bible teaches concerningtrue worship (Hebrews 12:22-24).
- Worship should occur in a context of reconciliation with God andothers. There must be humble unity in order for worship to be genuine (I John 4:20).
- Worship is most genuine when worshippers are striving towardholiness (Hebrews 12:14).

Questions

- Have you ever considered how being in individual conflict with someone else can affect the entire church's ability to engage in genuine worship?
- Do you think there is enough genuine worship in your life each week?
- If not, what are the hindrances to such worship?

Church Worship Summary

Genuine worship has great value in our lives and in bringing eternal glory to God. It requires spiritual preparation to cultivate humble unity, and hunger for personal holiness and closeness to God. It is the responsibility ofchurch leaders and of every worshipper to contribute to corporate worship.

Lesson 6: Last Things – The Return of Christ and the Millennium

Lesson Overview

Theme

In this lesson we will discuss major prophetic events yet future. These will include the return of Christ and the Millennium. We will discuss the major theological positions concerning both the timing of Christ's return in relation to the Great Tribulation and the nature of the Millennial Kingdom.

Scripture

Revelation 20:6

Objectives

- Knowledge
 - Understand more clearly the various positions on the timing of Christ's return.
 - Understand the various positions concerning the millennium and their implications.
- Attitudes
 - Develop greater humility concerning end time events.
 - Grow a sense of encouragement about prophetic events.
- Actions
 - Develop lesson plans or sermons on prophetic events with the aim of comforting people.

Introduction

Prophecy is difficult. Many teachers have made predictions based on a wrong understanding of biblical prophecy and have been subsequently put to shame. It is important to hold our interpretations humbly. In this lesson we will discuss major prophetic events including the return of Christ and the Millennium. We will discuss the major theological positions concerning the timing of Christ's return in relation to the Great Tribulation and the nature of the Millennial Kingdom. Along the way, we will discover the relevance of these positions to our Christian teaching and practice.

Scripture Discovery: Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)

- Does this passage sound an alarming or encouraging note?
- What is the first resurrection?
- What is the second death?
- To whom is this verse addressed?

Teaching Summary: The Return of Christ

There will be a personal, visible, bodily return of Christ

The New Testament teaches specifically that the Lord will return.

- Jesus suggested his return will be sudden and will result in our presence with him forever (Matthew 24:44; John 14:3).
- Paul taught about the return of the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:16).
- The writer to the Hebrews spoke of it also (Hebrews 9:28).
- James also affirmed the return of the Lord (James 5:8).
- Peter said this day “will come like a thief” (2 Peter 3:10).
- And John wrote that when Jesus returns “we will be like him for we will see him as he is” (I John 3:2).

We should eagerly long for Christ’s return

John’s response at the end of the Book of the Revelation should be the response of all who love Jesus, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

We do not know when Christ will return

Several passages indicate that we cannot know precisely when the Lord will return. These include Matthew 24:44, 25:13, and Mark 13:32-33.

All Evangelicals agree on the final results of Christ’s return

Although many differ on details, they agree on the results of Christ’s return:

- There will be a judgment of unbelievers.
- There will be a reward for believers.
- Believers will live with Christ in a new heaven and earth forever.
- God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will be worshiped forever with no more sin, sorrow, or suffering.

There are differing views over the details of future events

Evangelicals differ in their interpretations of the biblical passages concerning the return of Christ and subsequent events. These differences may include the timing of the Rapture of the church, the Great Tribulation, and the nature of the millennial reign of Christ. For example, while there is broad agreement among most Evangelicals that the Rapture of the church is that moment when believers, dead and alive, are taken to meet Christ in the air, there is much disagreement as to the timing of his return.

Basic Positions on the Rapture of the Church and Return of Christ

Evangelicals generally agree that the church will be raptured before the return of Christ to earth. However, just when the Rapture occurs in the chain of future events is subject to debate. We will discuss the Great Tribulation itself further in the next section. Our focus here is the timing of the Rapture of the church. Historically, there have been three common positions among Evangelicals. Each position places the Rapture in the prophetic timeline based on its relationship to the Great Tribulation.

Pre-tribulation rapture

The pre-tribulation rapture position is the belief that the Rapture of the church occurs before a seven-year period of tribulation on the earth. Proponents of this view believe that the church will not endure any portion of the Great Tribulation. I Thessalonians 1:10 describes Jesus' coming as delivering us 'from the wrath to come.' 1 Thessalonians 5:9 assures us that we were not appointed for wrath, but to obtain salvation. This is consistent with God's long-standing pattern of rescuing a remnant of his people when he visits judgment upon the earth. Thus, it is argued, God will preserve his people from the wrath of the Great Tribulation.

Mid-tribulation rapture

The mid-tribulation position is really a series of positions. Most mid-tribulation proponents refer to the same texts, I Thessalonians 1:10 and I Thessalonians 5:9, but suggest that they refer to the second half of the Tribulation in which devastating wrath is poured out upon the earth.

Exactly when the Rapture occurs within the seven year period of Tribulation is a subject of debate.

The traditional mid-tribulation position holds that the church is raptured at the half-way point of the Tribulation. Another popular version of the mid-tribulation rapture theory is the "Pre-wrath Rapture." This version holds that the Rapture of the church will occur just before "the great day of wrath" (Revelation 6:17). Proponents suggest that the church will be present for the first six of the seal judgments, or "the wrath of the antichrist." Then the Rapture occurs before the seventh seal which represents the wrath of God (Pre-Wrath Rapture).

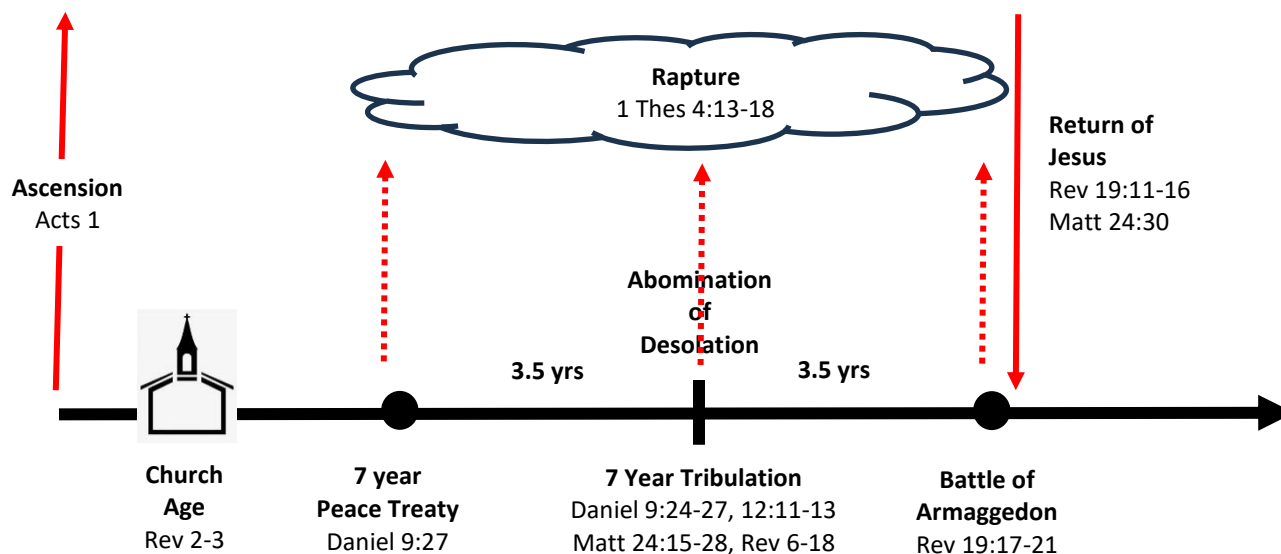
Post-tribulation rapture

The post-tribulation rapture position holds that Jesus returns following the Great Tribulation at the same time as his return to set up his kingdom on earth. I Thessalonians 4:16-18 describes believers rising to meet the Lord in the air. Post-tribulation rapture proponents hold that believers will then immediately return to the earth with Jesus as he establishes his kingdom. Proponents of this view find support in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25), and in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 among other passages.

One's view of the Rapture can be legitimately debated and is not a subject which should divide Christians of different viewpoints.

Questions

- Do you find yourself longing for Christ's return? Why or why not?
- If you knew Christ would return within 24 hours, what situations or relationships would you want to straighten out before he returned?
- What might be the positive and the negative results of a pre- tribulation rapture position in the every-day lives and attitudes of Christians?
- What might be the positive or negative effects of a mid-tribulational or post-tribulational position?



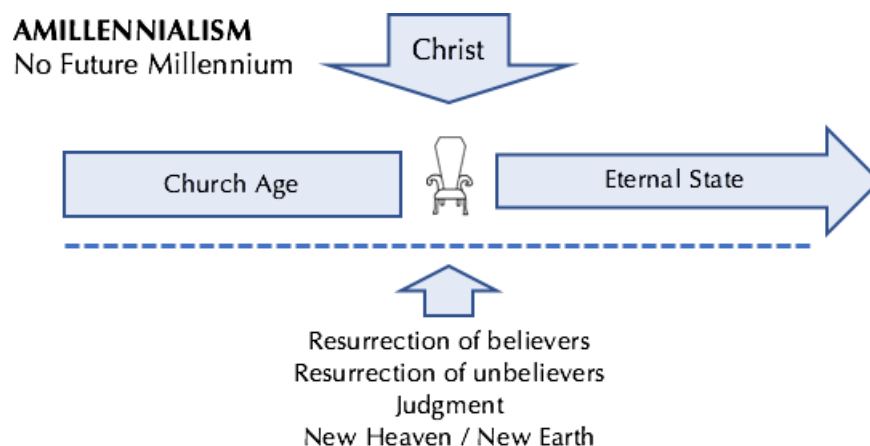
Teaching Summary: The Millennium

Differences also exist concerning the kingdom reign of Christ on earth. This doctrine, however, has more doctrinal ramifications than the doctrine of the Rapture.

Three Major Views of the Millennium

Amillennialism

Amillennialists believe that there will be NO literal, physical, 1000-year reign of Christ on earth. Rather, they believe that the events described in Revelation 20:1-10 have begun occurring in our present time. When Christ returns, there will be an immediate resurrection of believers and unbelievers. Believers will enter into the enjoyment of the eternal state while God will execute judgment against unbelievers who will go into eternal damnation. This position can be pictured as follows:

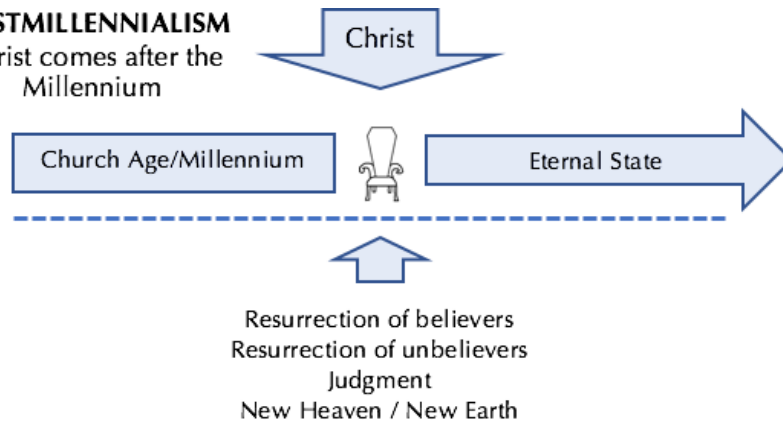


(Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1994)

Post-Millennialism

Post-millennialism is the belief that Jesus returns AFTER a millennial reign of Christ on earth. This is an optimistic view that, during the present church age, more and more people will become believers until societies are transformed leading ultimately to a millennium of utopian paradise on earth. After this Christ will appear. The view can be pictured as follows:

POSTMILLENNIALISM
Christ comes after the Millennium

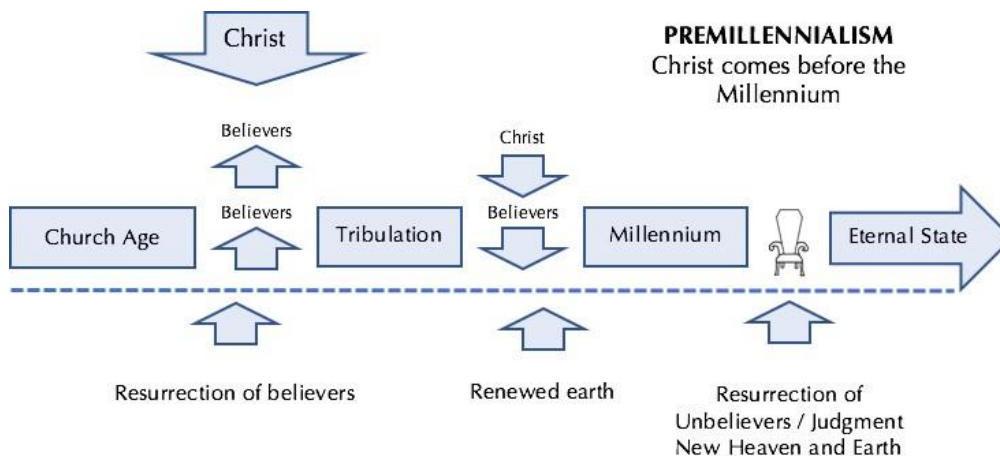


(Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1994)

This view became popular during the industrial revolution in the West when it appeared that technology and the missions movement would create massive change for the betterment of the world. However, it declined in popularity after two world wars and the birth of mass media which created a growing awareness of a host of world-wide evils.

Pre-Millennialism

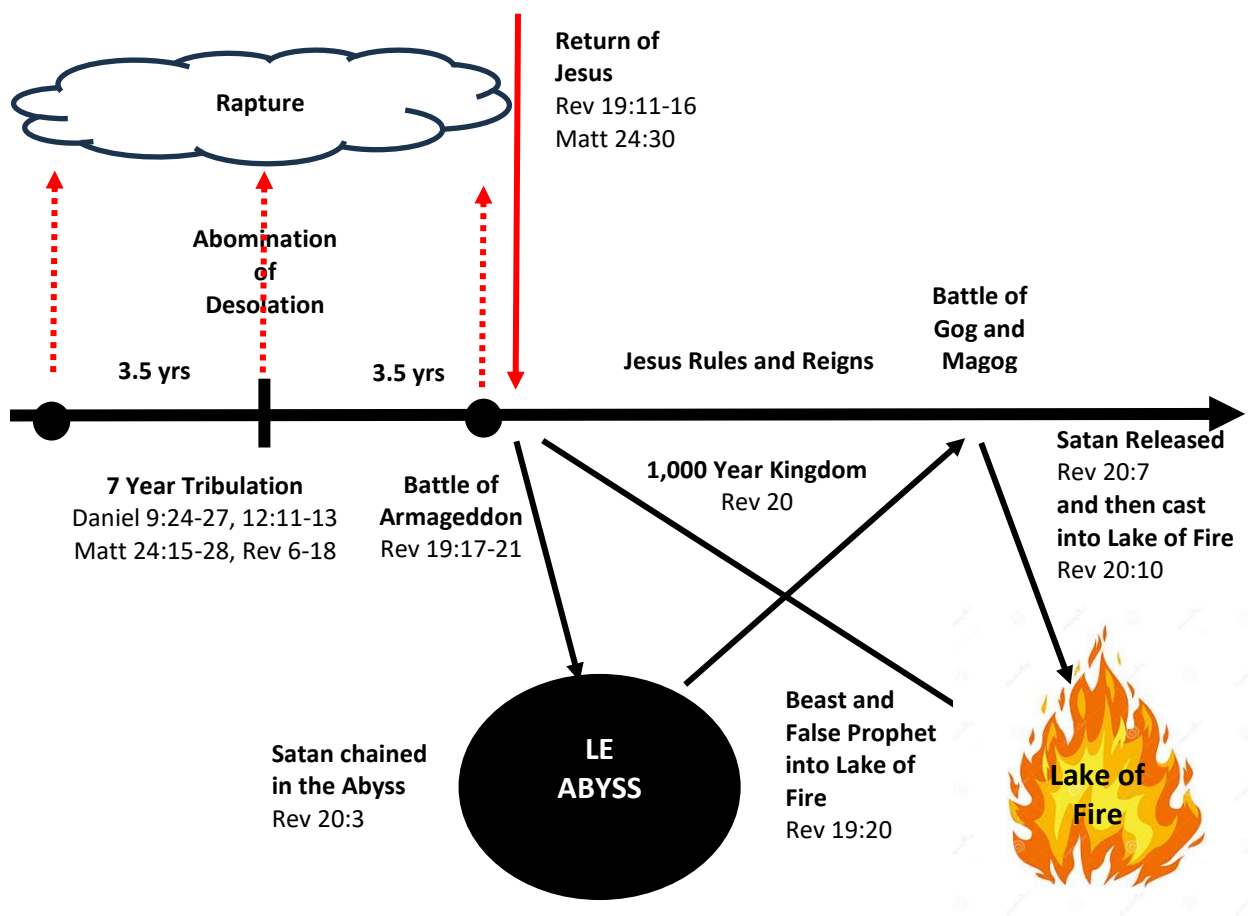
Premillennialism is the belief that Christ will return BEFORE launching a literal 1000-year kingdom reign on earth. This view has a history dating to the earliest days of the church. This view can be pictured as follows:



(Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1994)

As indicated above, there are slightly different versions of the premillennial view. These views agree on many points but differ on some others.

- The view pictured above is dispensational premillennialism. It is also called pre-tribulational premillennialism because its proponents believe the church will be raptured before the tribulation. Proponents also believe that there will be a literal 1000-year reign of Christ on earth, followed by a time of rebellion, judgement of unbelievers and, finally, eternity in which believers live in a new earth while unbelievers go to the lake of fire.
- Classic or historic premillennialism includes the post-tribulational rapture position. Proponents believe that the church will endure the Tribulation along with the rest of the world. After the Tribulation, Jesus will return. He will then rapture the church, meeting believers in the air. Afterward he will descend to earth with the church at his side to set up and rule over a millennial kingdom on earth.



ACTIVITY: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MILLENNIAL VIEWS

Divide the class into three groups. One group will discuss the amillennial view. One will discuss the post-millennial view. One will discuss the premillennial view. They are to answer two questions: “What do you find compelling about this view?”, “How does this view affect the purpose of the church?” and, “How does may this view impact our daily lives and witness for Christ?”.

Notes:

Questions

- Are you aware of the views of your church or denomination concerning the rapture and millennium?
- What should be your attitude toward those who hold a different view of the Rapture and millennium?
- What do you think it will be like to live on earth with a glorified body and with Jesus Christ as King over the whole world?

Lesson Summary

Some details of biblical prophecy regarding the second coming of Christ are difficult to understand. Therefore, it is appropriate that whatever view one holds concerning the timing and nature of prophetic events, that view should be held loosely and with great humility. Some aspects of prophecy are clearer and have greater implications than others. In such areas we should be fully persuaded of the truth, but should be patient, humble, and well prepared to carefully teach and reason with others who may hold clearly unbiblical views. Our teaching on prophecy should never be conducted to create unnecessary fear, but, rather, these truths should serve to comfort all who hear them. Righteousness wins out over evil. Justice is done. The curse is undone. God reigns in the end with his people at his side! “...come quickly, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)

Lesson 7: Last Things – Final Judgment, Eternal Punishment, New Heavens and Earth

Lesson Overview

Theme

In this lesson we will continue our discussion of last things by exploring the final judgment and eternal punishment as well as the new heavens and earth in which the redeemed will live.

Scripture

Hebrews 10:24-25

Objectives

- Knowledge
 - Understand the final judgment and its moral application as well as the nature of eternal punishment.
 - Understand the nature and importance of the new heavens and earth.
- Attitudes
 - Develop a sense of compassion for the lost and an urgency in evangelism because of the coming judgment.
 - Develop an anticipation for life in the new heaven and earth.
- Actions
 - Develop a series of lessons or sermons dealing with the final judgment and punishment vs life in the new heaven and earth.
 - Develop a plan to help the church evangelize more effectively.

Introduction

In the end of all things there will be a great divide between those who are judged to eternal punishment and those who spend eternity in a new and heaven and earth in the very presence of God. In this lesson, we will explore both sides of this divide by considering the final judgment, eternal punishment, and the new heaven and earth.

Scripture Discovery: Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

- When the author refers to a day that is drawing near, what is he referring to?
- Why do we need more encouragement and stirring up as we see “the day drawing near?”
- What kind of gathering is this passage referring to when it says that we should not neglect to meet together? Consider the context and what is happening when we gather.
- What kinds of good works do we need to do faithfully as the day draws near?

Teaching Summary: The Final Judgment

Fact of a Final Judgment

The Scriptures affirm that there will be final judgments of both believers and unbelievers (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15). There are many other passages which touch upon this final judgment.

Time of the final judgment

This final judgment occurs with the second coming of Christ (Revelation 20:11-15). It will result in believers being welcomed to a new heaven and earth while unbelievers are sentenced to eternal punishment.

Nature of the final judgment

Jesus will be the judge

Scripture makes it clear that Jesus will be the final judge. Paul describes him as “Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead” (2 Timothy 4:1). Peter describes Jesus similarly (Acts 10:42 compare to 17:31)

Unbelievers will be judged

It is clear that unbelievers will be judged (Revelation 20:12). Paul affirms that this judgment will include every person (Romans 2:5-11 KJV).

Believers will be judged

Believers will appear at the judgment seat of Christ, not for condemnation but to be judged and rewarded according to their works (2 Cor. 5:10).

Angels will be judged

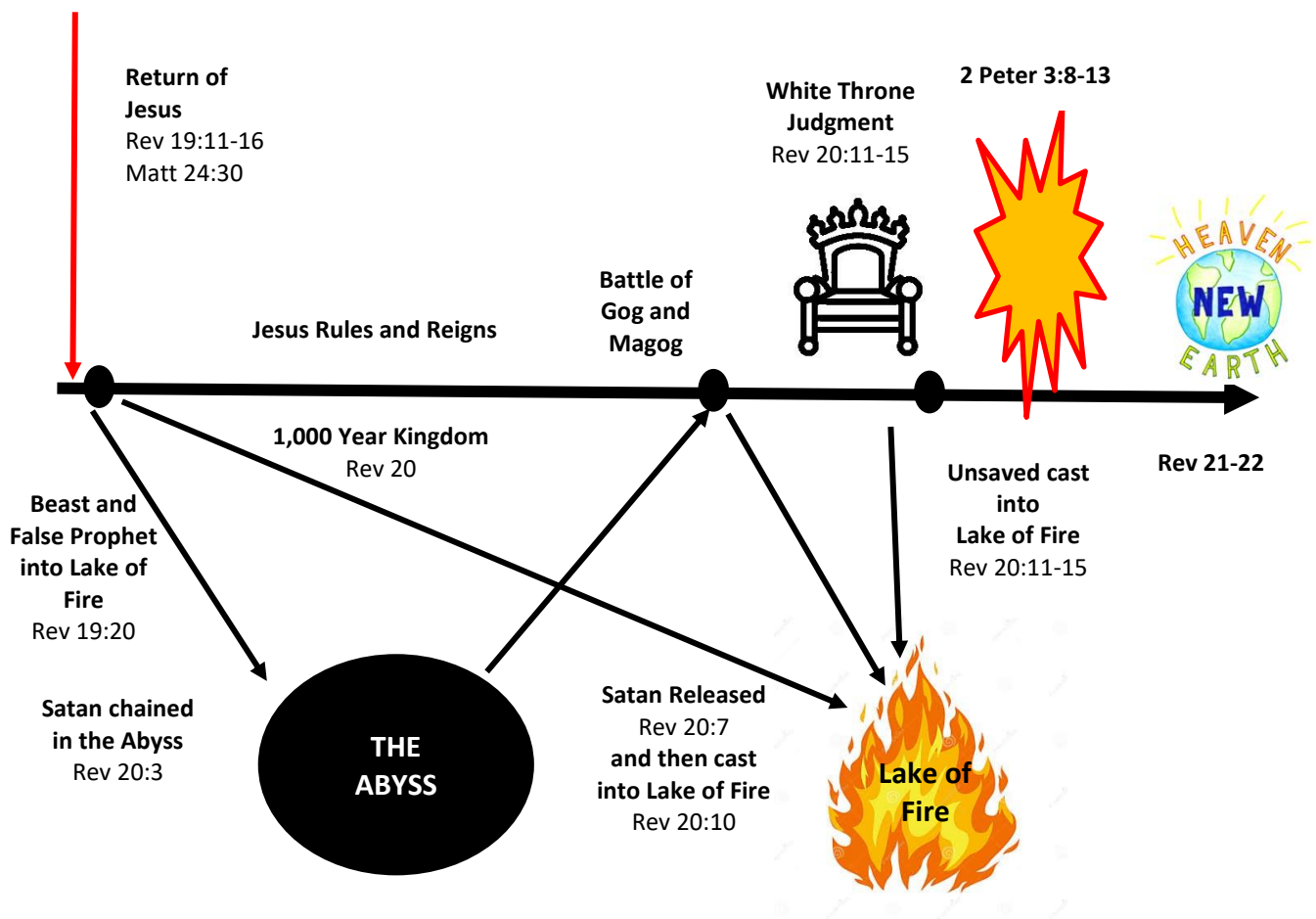
Peter and Jude describe rebellious angels as being kept in a place of gloom pending judgment (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). We can infer that all rebellious angels will face judgment.

Believers will help in the work of judgement

It is an amazing fact that believers will be part of the judgment of the world. Paul argues that believers will help to judge both the world and angels (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). John describes believers as, “those to whom authority to judge was committed” (Revelation 20:4).

Justice of God in the final judgment

The final judgment demonstrates God’s righteousness and complete victory over all evil. God’s final judgment will be completely just and impartial (1 Peter 1:17). Ultimately this judgment will result in great praise for the character and victory of God (Revelation 19:1-2).



Moral application of the final judgment

It satisfies our God given desire for justice

Since we are created in the image of God, we long for justice (Matthew 5:6). The final judgment assures us that records are being kept and that nothing has escaped God's notice. Perfect justice will reign.

It enables us to forgive others

When we recall that God will reward or punish according to people's actions (Romans 12:19), it becomes easier for us to forgive and not take revenge. We trust that God will do justice (1 Peter 2:22-23). We also understand the judgment Jesus endured in order to forgive all who repent including us. Once again, this makes it easier to forgive.

It provides a motive for evangelism

Peter indicates the Lord's return is delayed, in part, because of God's patience and desire for people to repent (2 Peter 3:9). If our hearts reflect God's heart, we have the same motivation and urgency about evangelism.

Questions

- How does the thought that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ affect your life today?
- How do you think it will feel to participate with Christ in the judging of angels and indeed the whole world?
- When you realize that people you know who are not believers will stand before God for judgment and that you will help with that judgment, how does that affect your motivation for evangelism?
- Does the fact of God's final judgment give you fear or reassurance? Explain?

Teaching Summary: The New Heavens and Earth

We will live with God eternally in a new heaven and earth

After the final judgment, we will live in perfect intimacy with God in the paradise of a new earth and heaven (Revelation 21:1-7).

What is Heaven?

The place where God currently dwells is known as heaven (1 Peter 3:22). Scripture teaches that it is a literal place (John 14:3). Scientists agree that other dimensions exist of which we are not aware. Even within our own dimension, there are things we cannot perceive such as electricity and radio waves. Our inability to perceive the dwelling place of God is not surprising.

What is the New Heaven and Earth?

The Bible affirms that there will be a new (or renewed) heaven and earth and that we will continue to exist as believers in this new creation (Revelation 21:1-7). This will be a place in which all sin is absent. All things will be under the rule of Christ (Hebrews 2:8). We will inherit this renewed world (Matt 5:5) and will have a role as rulers there as God originally intended for us (Genesis 1:28).

What kind of bodies will we have?

Revelation 21:4 says that “the former things have passed away,” this includes our current bodies. He says, “behold, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5). This also includes our bodies. Our resurrection or “glorified” bodies will be at home in the new environment. We will never die and will be capable of seeing God himself face to face (Revelation 21:3).

Magnificence of the New Creation

Revelation 21 and 22 describe the new heaven and earth as a beautiful place. The Holy City of New Jerusalem is there. (Revelation 21:2). The entire new creation will be physically beautiful. However, more important is the beauty of the relationships we will enjoy with God and one another (Revelation 21:3-4; 22:1-4). This will make it a true paradise.

This doctrine motivates us to store up treasures in heaven

When we consider the fact that this creation is temporary and that it will be replaced by a new heaven and earth, this provides a natural motivation to avoid placing our hope in anything in this life (2 Peter 3:11-13) Jesus speaks very directly on this subject, encouraging us to invest our resources in such a way as to bring about a reward in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

Questions

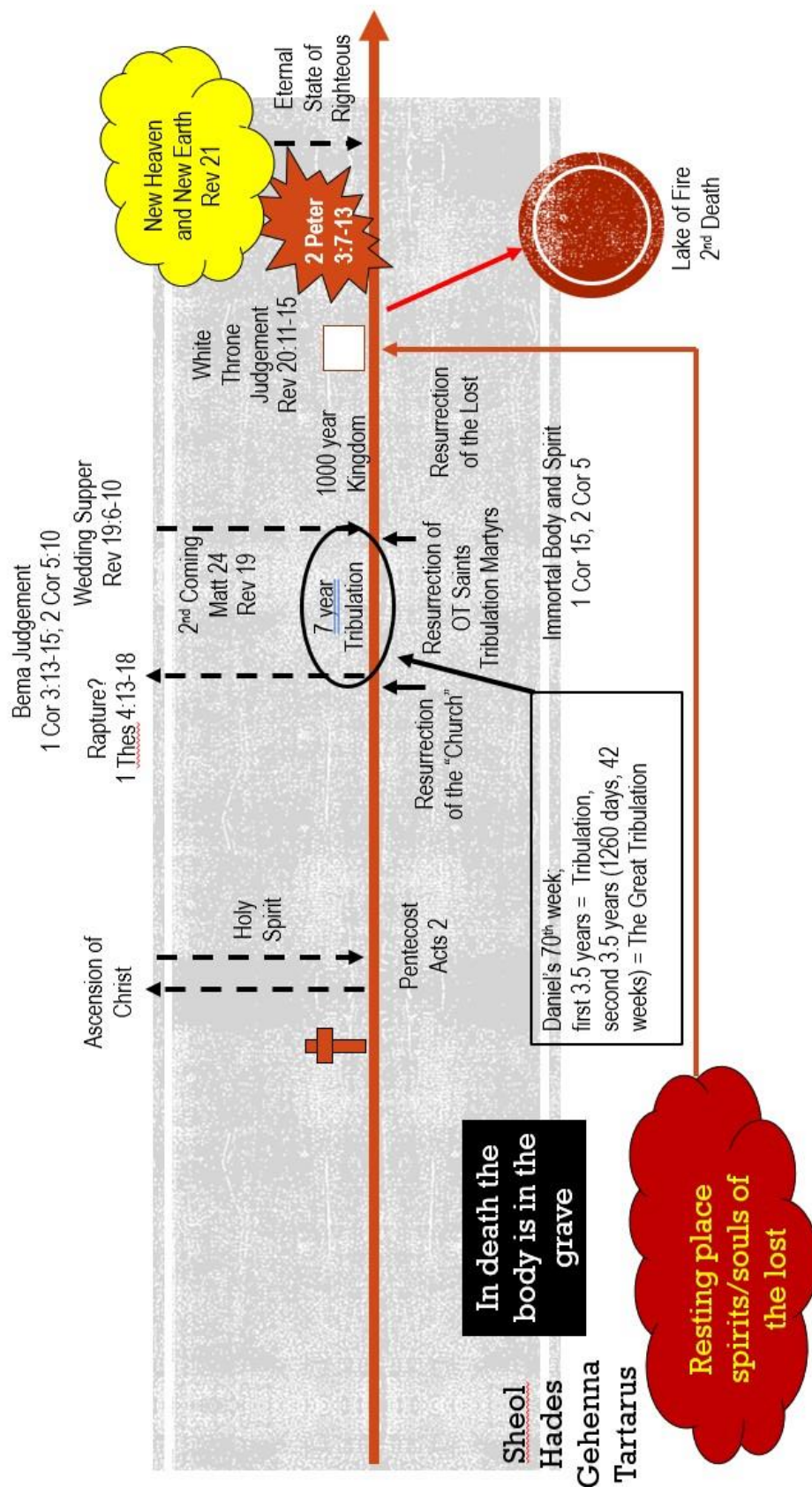
- Have you thought about what it means to lay up treasures in heaven or about earning a heavenly reward?
- What kind of effect does it have on your life if you really believe this doctrine?
- How do you think it will be to finally stand in God’s presence and see God face to face?

Lesson Summary

Judgment day is coming, followed by an eternal state either in a new heaven and earth or in the lake of fire. The difference is in the preaching and response to the gospel. Teaching this doctrine should motivate us to invest our time and other resources in what is eternal. It should grant us great reassurance that God will restore all things to perfection in the end. It should make the need for evangelism plain to us and create a sense of urgency about the gospel.

ACTIVITY: TESTIMONIES

Ask students to share testimonies of what it has meant to them to study the amazing promises of God in prophecy.



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