

## LESSON #10 HOPE GROWS AS I JOIN WITH OTHERS WHO SHARE MY CONVICTIONS -- THE CHURCH

- **Rom. 5:18** Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.
- **1 Tim. 2:3-4** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.
- **Mark 16:16** Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
- **Rom. 1:16** I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes:

### I. WHAT IS THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

Read 1 Peter 1:22 - 2:12

**Definition:** "Church" means those people who have been \_\_\_\_\_  
by God. (2:9)

1. Because God has caused us to be "born again," what is our status before Him? (1:22) \_\_\_\_\_
2. What was it that caused our spiritual rebirth? (1:23) \_\_\_\_\_
3. In 2:1 a number of characteristics are listed. Why would we want to rid ourselves of those things? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In order to do so, what does God urge us to do? (2:2-3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In 2:4 God begins describing the Church as a unit, picturing it as a building. Jesus is the cornerstone; what are we? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. In 2:9 we receive a definition of both our status before God and our purpose in this life. Can you identify each?

**Our status =**

**Our purpose =**

7. When the Christian lives his/her life in a God-pleasing way, who will notice? (2:12) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Why is that important? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Definition of the Holy Christian Church (the communion of saints):** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Called "Holy" because \_\_\_\_\_

Called "Christian" because \_\_\_\_\_

Called "Church" because \_\_\_\_\_

## **II. WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION? (a church -- small "c")**

**Definition:** A congregation is a \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ of people.

**Acts 2:42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

1. God wants congregational members and therefore entire congregations to be devoted to four things: \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Cor. 1:10** I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

2. As congregations devote themselves to those activities, God brings \_\_\_\_\_

**Hebrews 10:23-25** Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup>Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

3. Regular attendance at worship and Sunday School is important for several reasons: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**Read Matthew 13:47-50**

1. When the net was let down, all kinds of fish were caught, good and bad, which had to be separated at the end of the day. How does Jesus apply this? (v49-50) \_\_\_\_\_
- 
2. What important truth does that teach us about the difference between the Holy Christian Church and a Christian congregation (church)? \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Sam. 16:7b** The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

3. Who alone knows which church members are believers and which hypocrites? \_\_\_\_\_

**III. WHAT DIRECTIVES DOES GOD GIVE FOR CHOOSING WHICH CONGREGATION OR GROUPS TO JOIN? (CHURCH FELLOWSHIP)**

**John 8:31-32** To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

**Matt. 28:20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

1. God wants me to join a congregation which \_\_\_\_\_. God wants me to join that type of congregation because God wants me to have \_\_\_\_\_

**Matt. 7:15** "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

2. God warns me to recognize the presence of \_\_\_\_\_. (The reason it's so important to study the Word thoroughly is because a false prophet often will appear to be someone good!)

**Rom. 16:17** I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

3. God urges me to keep separate from \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Gal. 5:9** "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."

4. God warns me in this way because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 John 4:8** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

**1 Tim. 2:3** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

5. God gives me these directives because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Some notes on Church Fellowship:**

- Most church bodies today seek unity on the basis of minimizing differences. God teaches us to seek unity on the basis of adherence to the entire Word of God.
- There is a difference between a heterodox church and a cult. A heterodox church uses the Word of God and teaches that Jesus is the Savior. A cult denies that Jesus is true God and denies that He is the Savior. A person who belongs to a cult and who believes what that cult teaches is going to hell. (John 14:6) A person who belongs to a heterodox church body may be going to heaven. (God promises that His Word will not return to Him empty - Isa. 55:11) Unfortunately, their faith is in constant pressure from the false teachings and they fail to enjoy the full freedom which God has won for us.
- God's Word is clear. The reason that different church bodies come to different conclusions is because of the devil, the sinful world, and our own sinful flesh.
- In practicing church fellowship, we do not judge people's faith. Only God can do that. (1Sam 16:7) Instead, we judge teachings, and God has instructed us to do that. (Rom 16:17; 1John 4:1; Titus 1:9; 2John 10-11)
- The doctrine of church fellowship, when properly practiced, is a decisive statement of love; love for God's Word, love for our own souls, and love for the souls of others. It is always to be practiced in humility.
- These truths become more and more appealing as we grow in our understanding of God's love for us and for all, and as we grow in our understanding of His Word. (cf. Hebrews 5:11-14)

A final note: *"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."* (Matthew 10:32)

Jesus promises \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Officially joining a congregation which adheres to the full Word of God is a chance to put that passage into action!**

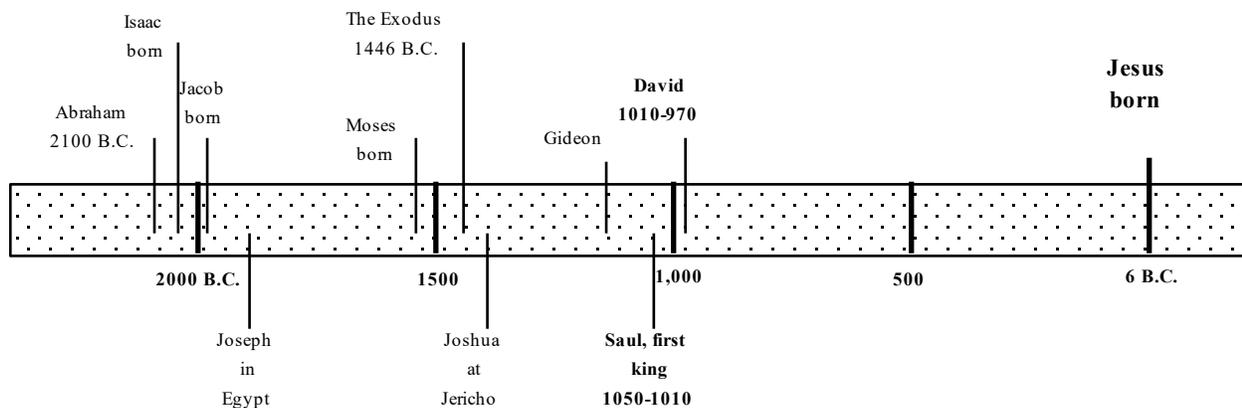
**Summary:**

- When God works faith in one's heart, the person becomes part of the Holy Christian Church, the group of all believers of all time. The HCC exists wherever the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments administered.
- Christian congregations are people gathered around the Word and Sacraments, desiring to grow in the Word and go with the Word. There could be hypocrites in a congregation, but only God knows who they are.
- God wants me to avoid joining those congregations or groups in which error is taught or tolerated; God wants me to join and be actively involved in a congregation which adheres to the entire Word of God.

**I'm a "living stone" built upon THE Living Stone! Hope grows!**

## FOR STUDY AT HOME DURING THE WEEK

19. Complete the homework sections below.
20. To build up your knowledge of God's Word, memorize these passages:  
**Rom. 16:17** I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way which are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.  
**Hebrews 10:25** Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
21. Study Addendum #9, regarding what different church bodies believe.
22. Suggested daily reading: Romans 15-16; Exodus 1-5



For many years, the Israelites were led by “judges,” such as Gideon. Eventually the Israelites asked for -- and received -- a king. The first king of Israel was Saul. Saul had a good, faithful start. Later, however, Saul rejected God and His Word. God then determined to choose a new family line from whom the Israelite kings would come. More importantly, from this family would come Jesus, the King of Kings. (Remember, the promise of the Savior is the only promise given to Abraham which was yet to be fulfilled.)

The first king from that family was a man named David. Today we study a section from early in David's life, while Saul was still the king and David was a teen-aged shepherd boy.

**Read 1 Samuel 17**

1. What was the name of the Philistine champion, of whom the Israelites were terrified?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. David had three older brothers serving in the army. When he arrived at the battle front to check on his brothers, what did he hear? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In v26 David cuts to the heart of the matter. Why shouldn't the Israelites have feared Goliath? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In v32, what does David say he'll do? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How does king Saul react to David's decision? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Since Saul's armor is too cumbersome, with what does David go to battle with this nine-foot giant? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is Goliath's reaction to David? (v42-44) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. David gives an outstanding confession of faith in vv 45-47. In your own words, why was he so confident as he went to battle? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the result of the battle? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Read Jeremiah 28

(Later in Israelite history, long after David, the Israelites became idolatrous and for the most part rejected God. God sent prophet after prophet to call them to repentance. God allowed some of the Israelites to be taken into exile, and warned that if the nation continued in its stubborn, sinful ways, that God would allow the whole nation to be exiled to Babylon. To teach this in a very concrete way, God had the prophet Jeremiah walk around with a yoke on his neck, symbolizing what would happen to the Israelites if they failed to repent.

1. While Jeremiah is doing this, a false prophet named Hananiah comes with a totally different message. He said that the Israelites weren't in danger of going into exile. Instead, he said that those who had earlier been taken away would come back. To make his message more dramatic, what did he do to Jeremiah? (v10-11) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why was this teaching so dangerous for the Israelites? (Remember, they're caught in stubborn rebellion against God at this time.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In verses 12-16, we hear the Lord's reaction to Hananiah's false teaching. What was God's reaction? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What was the outcome of the matter? (v17) \_\_\_\_\_
5. What does this account teach us about God's attitude toward those who add to or subtract from His Word? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Circle the statement which is most correct.**

1. a. A saint is a very good Christian who has died.  
b. A saint is anyone who believes in Jesus.
  
2. a. The Holy Christian Church is made up of all church members.  
b. The Holy Christian Church is made up of all believers in Jesus.
  
3. a. The Holy Christian Church is called “holy” because all the people in it lead perfect lives.  
b. The Holy Christian Church is called “holy” because all the people in it have been cleansed of their sins by the work of Jesus.
  
4. a. The HCC is made up of all Wisconsin Synod Lutherans.  
b. The HCC is made up of all those who believe in Jesus as their Savior, no matter what church body they belong to.
  
5. a. All people who are members of a congregation are going to heaven.  
b. Some people who are members of a congregation may be going to hell, but only God knows who those people are.
  
6. a. All Christians are equally special and important.  
b. Some Christians are more important than others.
  
7. a. It doesn't matter which congregation I join; they all basically teach the same things.  
b. God wants me to join a congregation which teaches each truth of the Bible accurately.
  
8. a. Most of the time false teachings and false teachers are easy to see.  
b. Most of the time false teachings and false teachers will be difficult to spot.
  
9. a. To refrain from joining a congregation in which error is taught or tolerated shows that I'm an elitist.  
b. To refrain from joining a congregation in which error is taught or tolerated shows my love for others.
  
10. a. Joining a congregation is a good opportunity to make a public confession of faith in Jesus.  
b. Joining a congregation is a good opportunity to add another line to my resume.

**Thought Questions:**

1. In your own words, what do we mean when we use the term “Holy Christian Church?”
2. Name several reasons why it’s important to join a congregation and to actively participate in it.
3. What are the things which God wants a Christian congregation to be doing?

**Write the Bible Passages, from memory if possible.**

Rom 16:17 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 10:25 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Addendum #9

### Do All Lutherans Believe the Same Things?

In Romans 16:17 God urges us to “*watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.*” God urges us in that way because any deviation from the Word of God puts our salvation in jeopardy and causes us to lose some of the freedom which God wants us to have. In addition, error never stays at the same level; it always festers and grows. Galatians 5:9 puts it this way: “*A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.*” The Lutheran Church has not been immune.

In 1971, Dr. Lawrence Kersten (who at that time belonged to the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod) was Assistant Professor of Sociology at Eastern Michigan University. He did a study in the three-county area of metropolitan Detroit to determine the impact of religion on the attitudes and values of the Lutherans in that area, and to see if Biblical, traditional Lutheran beliefs remained viable in 20th Century America. The results were published in a book called, “The Lutheran Ethic,” published in 1971 by Wayne State University Press.

Kersten surveyed a random sample of the members of the congregations of the different Lutheran groups, parish pastors of the different groups (241 parish pastors completed questionnaires), and students from the four groups. Below is listed a sample of the data collected from the pastors.

The synods involved were the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LC-MS), and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). **The number after each statement represents the percent of pastors who agreed with the statement.**

	<u>LCA*</u>	<u>ALC*</u>	<u>LC-MS</u>	<u>WELS</u>
1. The Bible is God’s Word and all it says is true.	10%	19%	74%	100%
2. The Bible contains some human error.	76%	74%	18%	0%
3. The account of Adam and Eve falling into sinfulness is simply a story which did not take place in reality.	83%	72%	20%	0%
4. A child is sinful at birth.	67%	74%	96%	100%
5. Only those who believe in Jesus as their Savior can go to heaven.	43%	52%	84%	100%

These church bodies didn’t start by questioning whether Jesus was the only way to heaven. Instead, they started by questioning whether close communion was correct, or whether practicing church fellowship principles was important. (Truths that are sometimes referred to as “minor.”)

But when error is taught or tolerated, it eventually snowballs, and soon even the most fundamental teachings of Scripture are endangered. A little yeast does work it's way through the whole batch of dough!

We thank God for the faithful Christians and faithful pastors who are in those groups. At the same time, we recognize the tremendous danger that exists for their faith. Jesus' words will remain true unto the end of time: "If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

- On January 1, 1988, the LCA and ALC merged (along with a third group) to form "The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." (ELCA)