

## Goals

In this last set of lessons, the focus will be on the church. More specifically, we will look at the spiritual church of God: what it is, the significance and the qualifications that make it the true church. We will also study the mission of the true church and the roles of the believers in completing that mission. Lastly, we will be introduced to the history of the True Jesus Church in the United States to help the students get a better understanding of how the church is guided by the hands of God as it grows and expands.

Through these lessons, the students will be able to recognize the importance of the church in God's plan of salvation. They will realize that it is not just a mere building or a place of worship but in fact, plays a significant role in the last days. They will be challenged to think about how to lead their lives faithfully and be witnesses to God and the church.

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3**Teacher Devotional**

As members of the household of God, we have all been given great privileges. One that we often take for granted is the fact that we can build up our faith with the support of other believers. It is hard, especially in this society, to stand alone and remain firm in our belief. Luckily, we can enjoy the encouragement from one another in church as we worship together. As we get closer to the judgment day, we will face many trials and tribulations. But God has prepared it so that we may find strength in each other. We should give thanks to God that we are able to be a part of such a unique family and work hard to build it up.

*Citizens in the Household of God*

*"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." (Eph 2:19, 20)*

## Lesson 9

## The True Church

**Listed Scriptures**

Eph 1:23, 5:23; Mt 16:18; Gal 4:6; Rom 15:18

**Lesson Aim**

- 1) To know the significance and qualifications of the church
- 2) To be able to keep the truth to the end and be saved

**Memory Verse**

"On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old." (Amos 9:11)

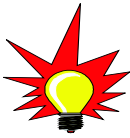
**Bible Reading For This Week** (for students and teachers)

Psalms 41-45

## B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



After the decline of the early church, its history and significance were blemished by the many heresies and deviations that crept in. The truth as preached by Jesus Christ was not restored completely until the true church was established again in mainland China in the early 1900s. The true church in the last days is not just any church that is grand or has a large membership. Rather, it needs to have specific qualifications. Otherwise, it is not the spiritual church of God. As recorded in Ephesians, "The mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, might be made known through the church to manifest the great power and manifold wisdom of God; to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:8-11, 20, 21). Today's lesson focuses on the qualifications and significance of the true church.



How many different Christian denominations do you know of? Do you know what makes one distinct from another that there needs to be so many out there? Do they even mean anything to you? Although there are many churches today, the Bible tells us that there is only one true church. Although we are not going to focus on the differences among all the churches, we will look at what makes the true church the only church that offers salvation.



## Part 1

*The Spiritual Church of God***A . The Definition of the Church**

The English word for “church” is originated from the Greek word “kyriakon doma”, which means “house belonging to the Lord.” This seems to suggest that the church is just simply a place of worship. The actual Greek word used in the New Testament is “Ekklesia,” which refers to the Christian believers themselves. This shows that the original meaning of the term “church” was the Christians, as opposed to merely a place of worship. This is also supported by many biblical references, that the church is the spiritual body of those who are redeemed through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus (Mt 16:18; Acts 20:28).

**B . The Significance of the Church**

Contrary to common belief, the church is not just a place of social gathering, where people meet up once a week to hear a message being delivered and do some charity work. Rather, the church is the body of Christ who is the head of the church and the Savior of the church body (Eph 1:23, 5:23). The church has the fullness of Christ (Eph 1:2; Col 1:24) and the believers enjoy a special relationship. “And if one member suffers, all members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Cor 12:26). The followers of Christ

are called out of the world to walk the journey of faith as a family.

- a. The church is the true vine in which the believers are branches. Believers are to abide in the vine in order to bear much fruit (Jn 15:1-6).
- b. The church is the fold of the Lord. All believers will be in one flock and belong to one shepherd (Jn 10:1-18).
- c. The church is the kingdom of God, and the house of God. Believers are the members of the household of God, and the fellow citizens of the heavenly kingdom (1 Tim 3:15; Eph 2:18-19; Heb 12:22).
- d. The church is the ark of the last days, which will save all nations, so that we may enter the new heaven and new earth (1 Pet 3:20-21; Lk 17:26-27).

**C . The Qualifications for a Spiritual Church**

Today, if we were to open a phone book or read the newspaper, we would see hundreds of ads for churches. How would anyone know which is the right or true one? The Bible has clearly defined three essential characteristics of a true and spiritual church, to set it apart from other secular organizations.

- a. A spiritual church must be built on the foundation of the truth (Mt 16:18; Eph 2:19-20; 1 Cor 3:11; 1 Tim 3:15). The Lord Jesus once said that when the spirit of truth comes, He will guide us into all the truth. Some examples of building on the truth:
  1. It must conduct baptism according to the teachings in the Bible (Jn 3:5; Acts 2:38; 1 Jn 5:6-8).
  2. It must observe the Sabbath according to the command of the Lord (Mt 19:17-19; Mk 2:28).
  3. It must be faithful to the Bible, not to follow the traditions of men such as Christmas and Easter (refer to Mt 15:8-9; Gal 1:6-9; Rev 22:18-19).
- b. A spiritual church must have the abidance of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13; Gal 4:6; Rom 8:9,16).
  1. The church is the body of Christ, and the residence of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:23; 1 Cor 3:16).

2. The apostolic church was built by the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the true church of the last days was rebuilt by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 2:1-4, 37-41; Joel 2:23, 28-29).
  3. Only the church with the Holy Spirit is sent by God and has the authority to forgive sins (Mt 16:18-19; Jn 20:21-23).
  4. The sign of receiving the Holy Spirit is to speak in tongues (Acts 10:44-47, 2:1-4,33; 1 Cor 14:2; Rom 8:26-27).
- c. A spiritual church is accompanied by many signs and wonders.
1. The Lord Jesus preached and performed miracles to glorify the name of God, to give grace to people and to testify that He is Christ (Mt 4:23-25; Jn 9:1-3, 11:1-4,40; Mk 1:40-42; Jn 3:1-2, 10:24-25, 20:30-31).
  2. Disciples were sent to preach the gospel, confirming the word through the signs that wonders that accompanied them (Mk 16:15,19,20; Acts 14:3; 1 Cor 2:4).
  3. The church of God must have many miracles to testify to the abidance of God and to convince people to believe in Christ (Rom 15:18; Heb 13:8; Jn 14:12).



## Part 2

### The True Jesus Church

Although we know the significance and qualifications of the true church, it is still difficult for people seeking after the truth to know which is the right church to go to. After all, there are thousands of denominations out there and every church claims to save and help people. That is why it is important for us to really understand why the True Jesus Church is the true church of the end days. This is the only way we can stand firm in our faith and remain in God's house until the very end. The following are some common questions that people may ask about the church. Some possible answers that follow can be shared with the students.

#### a. Why is our church called the True Jesus Church?

The word "true" refers to the true God, for God is true (Jer 10:10; Rom 3:4). This shows that the church belongs to the true God. Because the believers are branches of the true vine and they make up the church, the body of Christ, the church is also the true church. If the church belongs to the true God, it is the true church. The true church should also bear the name of Jesus, the name of God, for many reasons. Firstly, Jesus Christ is the head of the church and the

church is His body (Eph 5:23, 1:22-23; Col 1:18, 24). The church is also purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ and it belongs to Him (Acts 20:28; Mt 16:18). In addition, the place of worship must be a place for God's name (Deut 12:5, 11; Ex 20:24). Today, the church is an assembly for worship and should uphold the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the name "True Jesus Church" has a profound meaning and is by no means insignificant. Of course, we are not here to condemn or put down other churches. We only hold on to the fact that we belong to the true church.

#### b. The church of the apostolic times was the true church but it did not have a name. Why should the true church today establish a name? Does a name even have any significance?

The church in the apostolic era was the first church established by the Holy Spirit. At that time, false churches did not yet exist. All Christians belonged to this only true church, which preached the name of Jesus Christ. There was no confusion as there is today because there are many false prophets and doctrines being spread. The name of the True Jesus Church serves to set the true church apart from other churches and draw men to believe the true gospel of salvation.

#### c. How can God be so narrow minded as to save only one church and reject all others who love Him just as much?

God is not narrow minded. In fact, He offers salvation to everyone. Only, many people refuse to believe in Him and His promise. Also, if God were to accept everyone regardless of whether they obeyed Him or not, He would not be a just God and His words would mean nothing. The Lord said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word" (Jn 14:23). Just being good or honest is not enough for salvation. We must follow the words of God completely, that is, the teachings of the Bible.

#### d. If the True Jesus Church is really the true church, then why does it have such a small membership?

We cannot measure a church by its popularity or how grand it looks on the outside. It is the true gospel that saves. Even the Lord Jesus has said that many who confess His name will be rejected (Mt 7:22-23). Jesus Christ has also warned us that the path to the heavenly kingdom is a difficult one and the gate to the entrance is narrow (Mt 7:13-14). The true church does not just consist of believers who are now on earth but also includes believers of the past (Heb 12:22-23). In this respect, the church has more members than it seems. In addition, although the true church may seem lowly in its current state, God has already promised her future glory (Isa 21:3; Zech 8:29).

## Teaching Tips

You may wish to ask the students to share their ideas about the questions raised in Part 2 of the Bible study before sharing the answer. Many of the questions are intriguing and worth discussing. Also allow time for other questions they might have. If the schedule allows it, invite a pastor or a deacon to join the discussion so that the questions can be addressed immediately to strengthen the faith of the students.

## C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



**1** Is it necessary to join a church after believing in Jesus Christ? Is the church directly related to salvation?

**2** How does one choose a church? What are the qualifications for the church of God?

**3** What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church? Must a church have the Holy Spirit?

**4** On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the most convicted), how strongly do you feel you are in the true church, that this is the only church that will save? Explain your reasons.

## L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



### ***“How I Came to the True Church” by Ivy Siah***

Hallelujah, in the holy name of Jesus Christ I bear testimony. I originated from a Buddhist family. In the past, neither had I ever heard of Jesus Christ nor read the bible. But I knew that there was a God. So whenever I met any difficulties and had any requests, I would pray to the Chinese deities. At every religious festival my family would prepare a lot of food. So I had the concept that eating food already offered to idols would bring me peace. In reality, that is

not the case. When I was ten, my family visited my grandmother in Perak, Malaysia. It was then that we were introduced to a Chinese Taoist Sect and were persuaded by our grandmother to believe in it. My first contact with the true church started after I graduated from high school and began to study English in college. I met Brother Yong from the True Jesus Church. At that time, his own faith was not good; he smoked, used swear words, was ill-tempered and did not attend service at all. He did not tell me that he was a Christian. On one occasion, on discovering my religion he remarked that that god I worshiped was false. In March 1993, both of us enrolled for a university program in Sabah. In college we met Brother Louis Laiu who was our classmate. During one of the lunch breaks, we sat at the same table and during our conversation, we discovered that Yong and Louis were both from the True Jesus Church. From then onwards, Louis encouraged us to attend church services. I remembered the first time I went to the church in Likas, KK, Sabah. During the prayer, the tongue-speaking frightened me off and I felt the impulse to run. However, out of respect for others, I stayed. From then on, every time I attended any services. I always hoped that it would end quickly because I did not understand the truth and I became increasingly bored. Every time when Louis tried to explain the truth to me, I would ask many difficult questions to challenge him and put him off. I held the concept that all of us were worshiping God, albeit in different ways. I would not slander or discriminate against other religions. Prior to my conversion to Christianity, I was a religious teacher at the Taoist Sect. One Sunday, I was teaching the children at the temple as usual. After classes, Yong came to take me home and told me that he had to send his aunt to the church for the spiritual convocation. We had to make a trip to the church first. We attended the service. During the prayer, Yong asked me to go forward and ask for the Holy Spirit. I asked the Lord to forgive my sins and grant me salvation and eternal life. Miraculously, not long after, I began to vibrate and tears streamed down my cheeks uncontrollably. I felt strange and tried to stop, which I did. Later, some believers told me that I had been moved by the Holy Spirit. I kept this experience to myself. When I resumed praying later on, I encountered the same experience. Whenever I felt lonely, empty and helpless, there was always a source of strength like a warm current filling, comforting and soothing me. The emotions I felt at the same time were beyond description. Around that same time, my family could not afford to send me overseas to complete my final year of college but with the Lord's help, the impossible became the possible. The principal of my college knew of my plight and encouraged me to apply for loans from the banks. All my initial applications were turned down. Although I continued to pray, I was not very hopeful. Three weeks before I was due to start my final year in London, one of the banks informed me that my loan had been approved. I was overjoyed. Praise the Lord! The loan, how-

ever, was only enough to pay for the tuition fees. I had to find alternate means to pay for my living expenses. I told my mother that I needed 32,000 Ringit (Malaysian dollar) but she prepared 45,000 Ringit for me. At the time, the value of the Ringit took a plunge and what she prepared for me was just sufficient to cover my expenses. From this I learned that “God’s grace is sufficient for me,” as the scriptures tell us that we should “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and the rest will be added unto us.” Under the guidance of God, I successfully completed my bachelor’s degree. In December 1997, the London church held its first Evangelistic Training Camp. One week before that I was staying in the church on the Sabbath day as usual. On that night, I dreamt that I came to a temple and in it was an idol. The whole atmosphere was engulfed in smoke. A giant mosquito flew into the idol’s ear, seemingly to bring a complaint against me. At once, the countenance of the idol changed and it grew bigger and flew towards me. I clasped my hands together and said, “Hallelujah! In the name of Jesus I pray...” Before I could finish, I woke up. I was in deep fear and immediately prayed in silence. I could not understand the significance of the dream then. One week later, several sisters and I were sleeping in the sister’s dormitory. At night, I had another dream. I saw a huge wall and a black shadow came forth from the wall. It wore a black robe and had a long beard. It said to me, “I am god!” I said to myself, “God? Is this what God looks like?” I always thought He was holy and white. At that time, I wanted to pray but I could not. I struggled to wake up from my sleep. Suddenly, I heard a loud boom sound. I woke up and I was very frightened and again I prayed. The next day, I told Yong about my dream and on questioning me, he found out that I still had a talisman in my handbag. I immediately approached a deacon who removed the talisman in the name of Jesus Christ. On the first day of the spiritual convocation, I was greatly moved by the Holy Spirit. During the prayer session on the last day, I prayed earnestly, asking God to forgive my sins. Suddenly, I recalled my unrefined attitude towards my father and I became very remorseful. If I could not even respect my father, how could I worship the heavenly Father? I continued to beg for forgiveness. Then I felt a power coming from above. The Holy Spirit filled me and I started to speak in tongues. I was at a loss for words to describe the joy I was experiencing. On February 8, 1998 I was baptized. I was the only baptismal candidate that day. The weather was gloomy and it was windy that morning. I felt very cold and asked the preacher if I could postpone the baptism. He turned down my request. All I could do then was ask the Lord for courage. After the prayer, as every one was preparing to sing hymns, the clouds parted and the sun shone right on us. It gave me hope of becoming a new person. Everyone was deeply moved by the scene. I am only an ordinary person and yet God allowed me to receive such a great blessing. God loves me and I deeply believe that He also loves my family. My mother had an

operation and because of the prayers offered by the brethren, she experienced a speedy recovery. Although I have only believed in Jesus Christ for a short time, the little things in my life have allowed me to feel His abiding presence, guidance and protection. My greatest wish is for my family and friends to believe in Jesus Christ and receive eternal life. I thank God for guiding and choosing me and allowing me to experience Him—the only most high, true and living God. I thank Him also for allowing me to finally see the truth that there is only one ark, and only one way to salvation. May all glory be ascribed to the Lord. Amen.

### **Questions to think about:**

- 1.** *Many of you were baptized as children so it is hard to “feel” like this sister did when she came to know God on her own. But have you ever had any kinds of experiences where you felt like this member, knowing that God loves you and chose you for His own?*
- 2.** *This testimony has reminded us of how important it is to pray with God’s Spirit. He reveals and teaches us more than we can possibly imagine. Do you know someone who does not have the Holy Spirit yet? Remember this person in your prayer so that he/she may feel the power of God too.*

### R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



*Sometimes, it feels strange to tell others that we go to the True Jesus Church, a small church in this world that most people have never heard of. Compared to many other denominations, the true church may also seem more strict. But we need to remember that there is only one church that saves and even though it may not meet the “standards” of this world, it is established by God and can bring us into the eternal kingdom of heaven.*