



LESSON 7
ARTICLE VII:

THE CHURCH

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QUOTE ON THE CHURCH

“In pastoral leadership, the admonition that the church belongs to Jesus Christ because he died and shed his blood for her is a permanent game-changer that tames leaders from pride and arrogance”.

~Dr. Ezra Aniebue

LESSON 7: THE CHURCH

STATEMENT OF FAITH ARTICLE VII

We believe that in the New Testament the term “church” designates GOD’s people in their totality or in local assembly. The church is a fellowship of persons redeemed in Christ Jesus, divinely called, created, and made one under the sovereign rule of GOD. The church as a local body is bought and paid for by the Blood of Jesus Christ and led by the Holy Spirit. It is a fellowship of believers, voluntarily banded together for worship, study, Christian service, and the propagation of the gospel at home and abroad.

Christianity in the worship of GOD cannot be confined to any particular structure or any particular place because the worship of GOD is conducted within the heart of an individual at any time, and at any place according to the dictate of the heart, based on the Bible.

“The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and Ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe ME, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. GOD is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” John 4:19-24.

“Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold the kingdom of GOD is within you.” Luke 17:21.

“For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also His offspring.” Acts 17:28.

It is biblically sound for Christian organizations to believe in using all of the modern means possible such as television, radio, publishing and any other means possible in preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ as commanded in the great Commission. (Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-18).

Christian organizations should endeavor to work in cooperation with all believers who desire the literal fulfillment of Christ's prayer, “that they all might be one,” while maintaining scriptural sovereignty under GOD, to fulfill our purposes according to the dictates of our own conscience.

Religion is not confined to a sect or a ritual. The symbols of religion to one are anathema to another. What one may regard as charity another may scorn as foolish waste. And even education is today not free from divergence of view as to its validity.

Being committed to Christ's teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in us by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages.

The church in its inclusive sense is the fellowship of persons redeemed by Christ and made one in the family of GOD. The church, in its local sense, is a fellowship of believers, voluntarily banded together for worship, nurture, and service.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES ON THE CHURCH

Read each of the Scripture verses cited. For your own benefit, on a separate paper, write notes and insights you receive from reading these verses and parallel them with the stated statement of faith.

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive

your trespasses. Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal (Matthew 6:15-19).

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matthew 18:15-20).

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:41-42).

Praising GOD, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:47).

And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women) (Acts 5:11-14).

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Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them (Acts 6:3-6).

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away (Acts 13:1-3).

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed (Acts 14:23).

And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that GOD had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that GOD had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago GOD made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And GOD, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye GOD, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders GOD had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how GOD at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto GOD are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to GOD: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day. Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed

good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle (Acts 15:1-30).

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And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily (Acts 15:5).

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of GOD, which he hath purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

To all that be in Rome, beloved of GOD, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from GOD our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ (ROMANS 1:7).

Unto the church of GOD which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Know ye not that ye are the temple of GOD, and that the Spirit of GOD dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16).

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

But as GOD hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every

one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches (1 Corinthians 7:17).

Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:13-14).

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of GOD; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of GOD through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in GOD, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of GOD, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3:8-11).

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Ephesians 3:21).

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth, and cherisheth it,

even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-32).

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons (Philippians 1:1).

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18).

This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of GOD?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of GOD, which is the church of the living GOD, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:1-15).

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (1 Timothy 4:14).

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that

shall be revealed: Feed the flock of GOD which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over GOD's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for GOD resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:1-4).

And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted (Revelations 2:3).

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from GOD out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of GOD is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and GOD himself shall be with them, and be their GOD (Revelations 21:2-3).

NOTES ON STATEMENT OF FAITH ARTICLE VII

The Greek term for "church" is ekklesia" from the words ek (out of) and klesia (called). The church corporate are the "called out ones." We have been called out of sin and the world by Jesus Christ to be His church, His special chosen people: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of GOD, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (1 Pet 2:9-10).

Some people confuse the church and the kingdom of GOD. The two are closely related but not the same. The kingdom of GOD is the rule and reign of GOD by Jesus Christ through the Church. The church consists of the people who are citizens of the kingdom of GOD (Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20) and soldiers of the kingdom (Eph 2:25; 2 Tim 2:1). Jesus Christ has given the keys of the kingdom to the church (Matt 16:16-19). The Church is the people of GOD gathered for worship, teaching, nurture, prayer, fellowship, ministry, evangelism, and discipleship, among others (Acts 2:42; Matt 28:18-20).

There are many biblical metaphors that help us understand what the church is.

THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE HEAD

This is perhaps the most familiar description of the church. Paul uses it extensively in 1 Corinthians 12 to make the point that all believers are members of the one body of Christ. He states (1 Cor. 12:13): “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” He doesn’t mention in that chapter that Christ is the head of the body because his aim is to emphasize both the unity and diversity of the church. Just as in a human body there are many members but each has a different function, so in the body of Christ. Each member has a spiritual gift to be used for the overall good of the body. We’re different, yet we’re one body. Paul also states that Christ is the head of His body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23): “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Paul presents this image in his discussion of the respective roles of husbands and wives (Eph. 5:22-33). Lest we think that he is limiting his discussion to marriage, he states (Eph. 5:32): “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.” The apostle John presents the same imagery (Rev. 19:7-8; 21:2, 9; & 22:17): the church is the bride, the wife of the Lamb. The main application is that we are to relate to Christ in love, as a bride relates to her husband, and that we are to thrive in the knowledge that He loves us and chose us to be His bride.

THE CHURCH IS THE FAMILY (OR HOUSEHOLD) OF GOD

In Ephesians 2:19, Paul states, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of GOD’s household.” (See, also, Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17). The family imagery is also seen in the many places where GOD is called our Father and we are called brothers and sisters in the Lord. We are GOD’s

children through the new birth (John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; 1 John 3:1-2) and also through adoption (Rom. 8:15, 23; Eph. 1:5).

In addition to assuring us of GOD's fatherly love and care for us, this truth affects our mindset toward the church. If the church is a Sunday programme that you attend, then you go for what you can get out of it. But if the church is the family of GOD, then you're a member with your brothers and sisters. Families gather for fundamentally different reasons than audiences do. Families get together for relationships because of the common family bond. Family members don't threaten to go join another family if there are conflicts or if the family gatherings aren't meeting their needs. The family bond keeps them together so that they work out their differences in love. Or at least that's what should happen in Christian families and in the family of GOD!

THE CHURCH IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

Referring to the church, Paul writes (Eph. 2:21-22): "in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of GOD in the Spirit." In one sense, a believer's body is individually a temple of GOD, but in another sense, the entire church is GOD's temple (1 Cor. 6:19; 3:16-17). This means that He dwells in our midst and thus we must be holy in all our behavior.

THE CHURCH IS THE FLOCK OF GOD.

Paul challenges the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28): "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of GOD which He purchased with His own blood." Peter commands the elders (1 Pet. 5:2), "shepherd the flock of GOD among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of GOD; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness." This means that the church belongs to the Lord, not to any pastor or elder, and that church leaders are shepherds, responsible to the Lord to care for His flock.

THE CHURCH IS THE PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH

1 Tim. 3:15: "but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how

one ought to conduct himself in the household of GOD, which is the church of the living GOD, the pillar and support of the truth.” Paul mentions the metaphor of the church as the household of the living GOD, but then adds that the church upholds and supports the truth. In this day of widespread departure from the truth of GOD’s word, the church must stand firm in proclaiming and practicing the truth.

A main task of elders is that they must hold “fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9).

ASSIGNMENT:

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

True and False: Write a “T” for true or an “F” for false for each of the following statements.

1. The church is the people of GOD coming together.
2. The kingdom of GOD is the same as the church.
3. The church is made up of unbelievers and believers in Christ.
4. The kingdom of GOD is the rule and reign of GOD.

**CHECK OUT
WHAT YOU LEARNED,
LESSON 7**

**CLICK HERE TO
TAKE A QUIZ**