

LESSON 10



RECOGNIZING THE CHURCH

Scripture Texts: 1 John 3:1-3,10; John 13:34-35; John 15:4-8; John 8:36; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Timothy 3:5; 2 John 9-11

In studying about the church we have seen a divine institution, perfectly organized by God, with Christ the Head, and redeemed, Spirit-led, holy people the members of His body. This is not just an ideal, but it is real. It was built in the world and is here now in actual, visible presence. The Church of God is easy to pick out. The church can be called on the telephone and asked to pray. The church has signs following it. The church is a peculiar people. Today we will consider some of the reasons why she is so plainly distinguished among all others.

MEMORY VERSE: *"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."*

Titus 2:14

A Clean, Pure, Righteous, Loving People

First John 3:1-3 **What manner of love**—what marvelous love—that we should be called the sons of God. At the present time, in this present world there are children of God. **Therefore the world knoweth us not.** Those who do not love God or believe on Christ do not understand the manner of the church because they do not know God.

First John 3:10 **In this the children of God are manifest**—are seen, are revealed to sight. Then, the church can be seen, for **children of God** are the church. There are two kinds of people—children of God and children of the devil. God tells us the difference. God's children do righteousness and love their brothers. The devil's children do neither. God draws a line between His church and those outside.

The Line of Love

John 13:34-35 Jesus said, **By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples**—this is the mark by which both church and world can distinguish followers of Christ—**if ye have love one to another.** Since **God is love**, those born of God are filled with His love. This love sets the Church of God out as the lily among thorns, and as the apple tree among the trees (Song of Solomon 2:2-3). Easy for all to recognize.

A Dependent, Fruitful People

John 15:4-8 **Abide in me, and I in you.** If we are to maintain this love we must walk in obedience to **abide in God**, for **God is love** (1 John 4:8). **And I in you**—let His Word dwell richly within our hearts and minds, thus keeping us connected to the vine. We have no goodness or strength of our own to bear fruit of the Spirit any more than a branch cut off the literal vine can bear fruit of itself. Every branch draws its sustenance from the vine. Without this vital connection we can bear no fruit. Our fruit makes it possible for others to see whether or not we are a part of the church (Galatians 5:22-23).

If ye abide in me. The Christian who abides in Christ has all the promises of God. God supplies needs, not

wants. **Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you**—the promise of answered prayer—surely a great light that shines out to a world of unbelief.

A People Free Indeed

John 8:36 When a man has been made free indeed, he is truly free. This makes one a gazingstock to the world. No person without the power of God in his life is truly free. "Some rattle their chains to show they are free." They are bound by habits, passions, possessions, fears, and sins (John 8:34). There is only one way to be free, that is, to get rid of sin. The holy life is a life of greater freedom than anyone outside of Christ ever knew. The body may be bound or persecuted or even killed, but the spirit is free. When one is free inside, no bondage outside can conquer him. This is not all.

In Romans 8:1-2 we read that there is a people who are not condemned—free before God. They are still in the flesh; they live here on earth just as other people, eating, sleeping, working to make a living. But they do not walk **after the flesh**. They walk **after the Spirit**. The Holy Spirit directs their lives. They are free from the rule of **sin and death**.

A Peculiar People

First Peter 2:9 When one has a testimony that he is part of **a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and an holy nation**, he places himself among **a peculiar people**. This will get the immediate attention of all who hear, and he will become a gazingstock to the world. He will be watched and tried, and rightfully so. You are being recognized as the church, **a peculiar people**, and you are showing **forth the praises of him who hath called you**.

The members of the Church of God are a loving, obedient, peaceable, clean, pure, righteous, yielded (Romans 6:13), dependent, fruitful, free, Spirit-led, living (Romans 6:11), and peculiar people. God's people look different, act different, live different, because they are different.

Evil Teaching

Second Timothy 3:5 God tells us the proper attitude to hold toward those not of the church. Some have **a form of godliness**. They are religious but deny **the power thereof**. They do not believe in an experience of salvation from sin, the power of the Holy Spirit in one's heart, etc. **From such turn away**. We are not to lend our support to it.

Second John 9-11 Some others take a stand against Christ by teaching a false religion. They abide **not in the doctrine of Christ**, and so they have not God. Such are not in God's church. Clear directions for the proper attitude toward these are found here. **If there come any . . . and bring not this doctrine of Christ, receive him not into your house**—do not show favor to his false doctrine, do not give him an opportunity to present it favorably to you or to others, do not lend any of your facilities to aid the spread of evil teaching. **Neither bid him God speed**—do not wish him success. To do so is to become equally guilty with the false teacher **of his evil deeds**.

JUST A THOUGHT

The best argument for holiness is a holy life.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
It is revised and posted here with written permission from
(c) Bible Paths Publication, PO Box 299, Keithville, LA 71047