

Truth School 2020 Ministry Reading – Lesson 9

THE CHURCH

[The church is the goal God wants to obtain in His eternal economy. Each one of us who is saved participates in this goal, that God may obtain His heart's desire according to His good pleasure. Therefore, we must also know the church.]

What the Church is

The Called Out Assembly

The Lord Jesus Christ said that He will build His church (Matt. 16:18). [The church is what Christ will build through His death, resurrection, and ascension. The term "church" is *ekklesia* in Greek, which means the called out assembly. Thus, according to its literal meaning, the church is the congregation called out from the world by God. It is not a church building or any edifice for the worship of God.]

The Body of Christ

The apostle Paul said, "The church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). [The church is the Body with Christ as the Head; it is constituted for Christ in His life and Spirit with all those who have believed into Him. It is a living organism and not a lifeless organization like the clubs and associations in society.]

The body of a man is the fullness of a man to be his expression. Likewise, the church is the fullness of Christ to be His expression. Since Christ is the One who is unlimited and extensive, and who fills all in all, He needs a great Body to be the fullness of Himself who fills all in all to express Him in all things.]

The House of God

The Bible also tells us, "That you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). [To Christ, the church is His Body and His counterpart, while to God, the church is His house. On the one hand, this house refers to God's dwelling place, and on the other hand, it refers to God's family, God's household. These two, God's household and God's dwelling place, are just one. God's household is the very house for God's dwelling (Eph. 2:19, 22). A person's house is his place of living, residing, and rest. The church, being God's house, is also such a place to God. Today, the living God is living, residing, and resting in the church on the earth.]

God is living, and the church as His house is also living, having the life of God, living, residing, and resting with God. Thus, the living house of God is the pillar and base of all His reality, which is the reality (truth) of the universe. Everything of this living God is the reality in the universe. Without Him, the universe is vain and empty; yet all His reality is being supported and upheld by the church, which is His living house.]

The Kingdom and the Chosen Race

[After man became fallen, God chose the race of Abraham. The first race, the race of Adam, failed God. But after the great flood, God began again with a second race of mankind, the race of Noah.]

This second race also failed God. Then God chose the third race, the race of Abraham, after the time of Babel. The purpose of God's choosing of Abraham is revealed in Genesis 12:1-2. These two verses tell us that God chose Abraham with the intention of having a kingdom. The Lord told Abraham that He would make of him "a great nation" (v. 2). This great nation is a kingdom. The kingdom is a sphere, a realm, to exercise authority. Without the kingdom God can never exercise His authority. For God to accomplish His purpose, He must have a realm, a sphere, as a kingdom for Him to exercise His authority. This is why the Lord Jesus mentioned the kingdom when He taught the disciples to pray in Matthew 6. At the beginning of the Lord's prayer and at the end of it the kingdom is mentioned. The beginning of the Lord's prayer says, "Let Your kingdom come" (v. 10). The end of this prayer says, "For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen" (v. 13).]

The Three Aspects of the Kingdom of the Heavens

[With the kingdom of the heavens there are three aspects: the external appearance of the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 13), the reality of the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 5—7), and the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 24—25). If we are going to understand the kingdom of the heavens we must know these three aspects. On the day of Pentecost, the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens and the reality of the kingdom of the heavens began. The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens begins with the coming back of the Lord Jesus. When the Lord comes back, the kingdom of the heavens will be manifested. On the one hand, we can say that the kingdom has started already, but this is just the appearance and the reality, not the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens. The appearance of the kingdom of the heavens includes all of the false Christians, but only the victorious, overcoming Christians are in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. When the Lord Jesus comes back, that will be the time of the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens.]

We should exercise to be in the reality of the kingdom every day throughout the day so that we will be the ones to bring in the manifestation of the kingdom. The simple way to accomplish this is to get revived every morning by calling on His name and contacting Him through pray-reading two or three verses. We can overcome by pray-reading throughout the day. This type of exercise will prepare us for the kingdom as well as hasten the coming of the kingdom.

Questions:

1. What is the church to God? How does He feel about the church?
2. Suppose a friend asked you what church you go to. How would you answer?