

The New Testament Church #5

“What is the Church? #2”

Introduction: Men are sometimes presumptuous.

A. In 1640 a New England assembly approved three resolutions –some of the Puritans.

1. *“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”* –Vote approved.
2. *“The Lord may give the earth or any part of it to His chosen people”* –Vote approved.
3. *“We are His chosen people”* –Vote approved.

B. While we admire their conviction and confidence we question their methods.

1. Being God’s chosen people is not determined by the popular vote of an assembly of church-goers. A church is not God’s people by the members voting it so.
2. Rev 3:17 *“Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’; and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked;”*
3. We are God’s people individually when we believe in Jesus Christ and when we commit ourselves to doing His will. Our being God’s chosen people is an individual achievement.
4. Rev 3:4 *“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”*
5. It is up to me to be sure I am chosen by God. It is not up to the majority vote of a local church. I must examine myself and be sure I am a child of God. It is a matter of seeing God’s vote and not men’s if I am His chosen.

C. Last week we asked, *“What is the church?”*

1. We saw several things about the church.
 - a. The church is **not a building**. It is **people**. Buildings can be destroyed. The church can never be destroyed.
 - b. In the N.T. the church is the **“local church”**. There is no organization larger than the local church. Each local church can do all the Lord wants it to do on its own.
 - c. It is accountable only to the Lord and not to any group of preachers or magazine or college or board of elders. The church of Christ is seen and understood by local congregations of God’s people.
2. We also saw several word pictures that help us understand what the church is.
 - a. The church is the *‘bride of Christ’*. It is **loved and provided** for by Him.
 - b. The church is the *‘flock of the Lord.’* It is **cared for and led into paths of righteousness** by Him.
 - c. The church of Christ is the *‘family of God.’* We are **children** of our Father in heaven and must **follow the rules of the house**. We have the **inheritance** as children to look forward to.
 - d. In the church we are *‘laborers in the vineyard’*. We have **work to do** in the Lord’ field.
 - e. The church is the *‘kingdom of the Lord’*. We are **citizens** and enjoy the blessings of the great kingdom of God.
3. The church is not simple. It is not unimportant. It takes all of these pictures, and many more, to fully understand what the church is.

D. We will consider several more word pictures of the church of Christ today.

I. The church is His chosen people.

A. Sometimes we are honored by being chosen for something.

1. We may be chosen by our boss to be given an award for all the good work we have accomplished. There may even be a raise or a bonus that goes along with it.
2. We may apply to join an important or exclusive society and be invited to join. This is an honor and something we have wanted for a while.
3. We may be chosen by a random drawing to win a grand prize of some kind. While this is chance, we are still glad and consider ourselves lucky.

B. God has chosen to save men.

1. While many misunderstand what it means to be chosen by God, He has chosen to save certain ones. Being part of the church is special because God has chosen us to be saved.
2. 1 Peter 2:9-10 *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; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*
3. We are a **chosen and special people**. We once were not a special people but now we are chosen to be the people of God.
4. Here we are chosen to proclaim God's praises and receive mercy from Him. We will consider being a royal priesthood and holy nation later.
5. Eph 1:3-5 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...*
6. Notice several things here:
 - a. **First** we are *blessed* with every spiritual blessing that heaven has to offer.
 - b. **Second** we were *chosen* by Him before He made the worlds.
 - c. **Third** we are *predestined* to adoption as sons.
 - d. And **fourth**, it is the *good pleasure* of God the Father to do this.
7. We see what a blessing and privilege it is to be chosen by God. We need to understand what this means and **how** we are chosen by the Lord.

C. We are not predestined just by God's sovereignty.

1. This mean we are not saved as the **Calvinists** teach. It is not a matter that God determined who is saved or lost personally before creation with no choice on man's part.
2. Pure Calvinism says a person is saved or lost by God's choice whether a person wants to be saved or lost or not. That choice can not be changed. Man has no choice in the matter.
3. A natural conclusion to this belief is that if men are saved only by God's choice and this can not be changed, why do anything in religion?
4. Why worship if it doesn't make any difference? Why sacrifice if it doesn't matter? Why teach others if their eternal destiny is already determined and cannot be changed?
5. Many try to give reasons as to why they should still worship and evangelize. However in the 1700's a group of Baptists realized this. They were called, "**Particular Baptists**".
6. They almost died out by not evangelizing until one of them, an Englishmen named William Carey, decided it was OK to evangelize and saved the denomination; *Christian History Made Easy; page 115.*

D. We do have a choice in our being chosen.

1. God did not choose to save certain ones before creation. And He did not choose to doom certain ones even before they were born.
2. Instead he choose to save people who would respond to His gracious invitation. He predestined that those who obeyed the Gospel would be saved by it.
3. John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*
4. John 1:12 *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:*
5. Notice in John 3:16 that God chose to saved those who would believe in Jesus Christ. These are the ones who would have everlasting life.
6. Notice in John 1:12 that if we believe in His name and receive Him we have the right to become children of God. Believing is not enough
7. We see that God's great love sent Jesus to die for us that we might believe in Him and receive Him and then become children of God. God chose to save all who would do this before creation. This is when He planned to send Jesus to die for man's sins.
8. If we believe in Jesus we **believe His words**. If we receive Jesus we **receive His words** –John 12:48. It is the words of Christ and His apostles that tells believers how to receive Him and have the hope of everlasting life –John 6:63, 68.
9. Acts 2:36-38 *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remis-*

sion of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

E. We see then the blessing of being chosen by God. This makes us special.

II. The church is a Royal priesthood.

A. The first thing we see after Adam and Eve sinned is their children worshipping God.

1. **Genesis 4;** Cain and Abel each offered a sacrifice to God. Abel’s sacrifice of the firstborn of his flock and the fattest was accepted by God. He is remembered in scripture as a man of faith and righteousness –Luke 11:51.
2. Hebrews 11:4 *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*
3. Cain and Abel seem to have worshipped individually. There seems to be only half a dozen or so people on the earth at this time. They do not worship publicly yet.
4. God rejects Cain’s sacrifice and He personally tells him about it. Cain does not repent and kills his brother in anger. He is cast out of the family. Later as Adam and Eve have more children they begin to worship publicly.
5. Genesis 4:25-26 *And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.” 26 And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.*
6. ‘**Calling on the name of Jehovah**’ seems to be a figure of speech for worship. **Men** began to do this. Cain and Abel (and probably Adam and Eve) had done so individually before. Now they do so as a group.
7. Genesis 12:8 *And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.*
8. In what we call the ‘**Patriarchal Age**’ the fathers were the heads of the home and directed the worship for the families. The worship was private but not just individual. A righteous man might intercede for others not of his family.
9. Genesis 14:18-20 *Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tithe of all. –Heb 7:1, 2.*
10. Genesis 20:7 *“Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.”*
11. Public worship became the common means of worshipping God. When God set up the law of Moses public worship was the norm. While men have always been able to worship and pray individually, public worship has been the normal and usual means of pleasing God.

B. We are the **priests** of God today.

1. The **father** in each home is not the priest today. We do not have a special priesthood that is separate from the people as the Jews did. All God’s children are priests today and can worship God and offer sacrifices.
2. 1 Peter 2:9 *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;*
3. The Jews had a special priesthood from the tribe of Levi. Descendants of Aaron were the priests for the people. The people could not offer sacrifices at the tabernacle or the temple. Even the kings of the people could not enter the temple.
4. 2 Chronicles 26:19 *Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar.*
5. We are a ‘**royal priesthood**’. We are kings and priests to God. **Every Christian is a priest.** Every Christian is able to worship and serve God himself and is not depend on anyone. This is a special relationship that others have not had.
6. Revelation 1:5-6 *...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
7. While, as priests, we can make sacrifices and worship we see in the N.T. that they continued to **worship as a group**. The church is people. It is make up of people who are kings and priests. These special people

assemble to worship God before men –Heb 10:23-26.

8. We are priests to God and can worship and offer sacrifices. We are under a great, eternal High priest. This is Jesus Christ Himself. He has entered into heaven for us.
9. Hebrews 6:19-20 *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

C. We are also the temple of God today.

1. In the **Patriarchal age** they worshipped wherever they were. There was no special place. Abraham built altars and make sacrifices everywhere he traveled.
2. In the **Mosaic age** they had a **tabernacle** or **temple** to worship God at as a group. They had a special place where everyone had to come at certain times to worship according to the law.
3. Things are different today. We are all priests and can offer up spiritual worship anywhere and any time. We do not worship God through physical things today but spiritual.
4. John 4:23-24 *“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*
5. The church is not only the **priesthood** today, it is also the **place where worship is done**. We are the temple of Jehovah God –Eph 2:19-22. The church is God’s temple and must be pure.
6. 2 Cor 6:16 *And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”*
7. 1 Cor 3:16-17 *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.*
8. God dwelt in the O.T. tabernacle and temple. He dwelt in the **Holy of Holies** above the **mercy seat**. His presence filled the temple when it was built in Solomon’s day. Jesus, our High Priest today, has entered into heaven, the holy of holies for us.
9. God dwells in the church today. We have God in us and Christ in us and the H.S. in us. We are also in them. **God only dwells in the church if it remains pure.**

D. We are also the sacrifices of God today.

1. Priests offer up sacrifices in the temple. Sacrifices were also offered up at other places. King Saul was supposed to wait for Samuel to come and make the sacrifice before battle. When he thought Samuel was late he made the sacrifice and was condemned –1 Sam 13.
2. **Christians offer up many sacrifices.** We offer up spiritual sacrifices when we worship God today. Our worship is a pleasing sacrifice to God today. Our praying and singing are the sacrifice of praise to God.
3. 1 Pet 2:5 ... *you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
4. Heb 13:15 *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*
5. **Our lives are also living sacrifices to God.** The O.T. sacrifices were dead sacrifices. The bulls and goats were killed and their blood offered. We are living sacrifices and honor God by our holy lives.
6. Romans 12:1-2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*
7. Matthew 5:13-16 *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. 14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*
8. Let’s not miss some of the **temple imagery** here. Salt was a part of the sacrifices. The lampstand in the holy place symbolized God’s spiritual light to the people. We are the salt and light of the world. While Jesus uses imagery of the world here the hearers probably think of the temple too.
9. Leviticus 2:13 *‘And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.*
10. We offer ourselves as living sacrifices. Jesus Himself was a sacrifice. He died on the cross for our sins. It is His sacrifice that makes us children of God, God’s chosen people and priests. We need to sacrifice our-

selves for Jesus as He did for us.

11. John 1:29 *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

E. We see a lot is involved in being a 'royal priesthood'.

Conclusion: We want to be chosen by God today.

A. God wants all men to be saved and has done His part –1 Tim 2:3, 4.

1. God has chosen us. We must in turn choose Him. We choose Him by believing in Jesus Christ and receiving Him into our hearts and lives.
2. We do this through repentance and baptism. In repentance we turn from our sins and determine to follow Him and His word. In baptism our sins are washed away and we become children of God.
3. Mark 16:15-16 *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
4. Acts 17:30-31 *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."*
5. Acts 18:8 *Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.*
6. Acts 22:16 *'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'*

B. If we can help anyone become right with God please let us.