



YOUR CHURCH AND MINE

QUEST LESSON F-10

The Problem: Why should you be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? There are two simple answers to that question: (i) The Adventist Church believes in Christ and His message as taught in Scripture; (ii) You have studied that message and have seen that it is thoroughly Biblical. The next step is for you to be baptized as a public demonstration of your faith in Christ and your acceptance of all that He teaches in His Word. Then you will be accepted into membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As we shall discover in this lesson, that is how people become members of the apostolic church. They accepted Christ and His teaching, were baptized, and then became members of the church. You see, it is not possible to separate Christ from the teachings of His Word. When you give your heart to Christ, you acknowledge that whatever He teaches you through His Word is the truth that you will live by. Baptism is the beautiful service that Jesus designed as the means of announcing your decision to the church. When you are baptized, you are telling everyone that Christ has come into your heart by the Holy Spirit and that you have accepted the way of life that He has laid down for you in the Bible.

That is exactly the same choice that was made by every member of the Adventist Church. So when you join the church, you enter into fellowship with others who believe just as you do. You have a new family to belong to, and your brothers and sisters are counted in millions all over the world. Wherever you go you will find fellow Advent believers and Adventist churches, schools, colleges, and hospitals.

It is truly wonderful to belong to the family of God on earth who have accepted the truths given to us by Jesus and who are looking anxiously and longingly for His second coming. This family of church members around the world has the special task of making Christ known to those who have not heard of Him and those who may have heard but who do not believe. When you join the church, you become a witness for Christ in whatever sphere of activity you may find yourself. The same message that has gripped your heart is very much needed by every man, woman, and child in our world today. God has told us that if each church member is a faithful witness to Christ and His truth, the Gospel will soon be preached to every person on earth, and the end will come (Matthew 24:14).

We want to welcome you in advance as a member of God's worldwide family. And we want you to know that we love you already as a special brother or sister whose fellowship brings blessing and joy to our hearts. As a member of the church, you will be the means of strengthening other believers, and they will be able to bring you the friendship and fellowship that you need.

Now let us turn to God's holy Word and see that all of the things we have said in this introduction are very simply and beautifully explained there.

Objectives

First, we will see that Jesus Himself extends an invitation to you to join His church.

Second, we note that the church is for fellowship.

Third, the church is for worship.

Fourth, the church is for service.

Fifth, we answer the question, why should you be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

I. Jesus' Invitation For You To Join The Church

Jesus loves you infinitely! That message is repeated in various ways throughout the Bible, and it is demonstrated by the way He has guided your life. In His loving mercy, He has made it possible for you to find Him as your personal Savior from sin, and to learn the thrilling truths that He has given in His Word. Now He says to you, "Come and join my people. Be a member of the body of believers who cherish the truths that you have been studying. I want you to join My family so that you can have brothers and sisters to support you, and so that you can also bring happiness to them."

The Word

1. What is Jesus' desire for His church? How does that desire comprise a special invitation for you to join His church? John 10:16.
2. What bond did Jesus pray would exist between all those who believe in Him and accept His truth? John 17:20-21.
3. In the apostles' day, what did believers do after they were baptized? Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14.

Explanation: When Jesus said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring" (John 10:16), He was looking forward to as many as would respond becoming members of His church. This is an invitation to the whole world to forsake sin, accept Jesus, and join His church. His earnest desire is that "there shall be onefold and one shepherd." It was never the divine intention that Christians should be split up into many denominations and organizations. If all followed the teachings of the Word of God and allowed the Holy Spirit to reign in their lives, all would believe the same truths and follow the same Christian standards and practices. When we turn with all our hearts to the teachings of Jesus in the Bible, we gain a message that binds us very closely to the heart of God and to the hearts of others who have discovered the same truths. This is what Jesus wanted to happen and what He was predicting when He said, "There shall be onefold and one shepherd."

The unity of love and belief that results among people of all nationalities and classes who accept Christ and His truth is the greatest evidence of the Gospel's validity. It is this unity of love and understanding that Jesus knew would convince many that He was indeed the Messiah (John 17:21). Where there is unity of belief in Bible truth, there is the true Christian church. This is the church to which you should belong.

In the apostolic era, people who believed were baptized, and then they joined the church (Acts 2:41, 47, etc.). Baptism demonstrates that the candidate has accepted Christ and His way of life. It is a public sign of a personal commitment. When that sign has been given to the church and the world, the believer is then to be admitted as a church member. That is how it happened in the days of the apostles, and that is how it happens today.

Relevance: The Lord is inviting you to be baptized and become a member of His church. If you have accepted Him as Lord, believe the truths of His Word, and are willing to live by the standards He has set down for you, the next step is to identify yourself with other people who have made the same decisions.

II. The Church Is For Fellowship

God did not create man to live in solitude. He made us social beings, dependent upon Him and dependent upon one another. The church is the community of all genuine believers in Christ and His teachings. The members of this community have a great deal in common. That is why they enjoy fellowshiping together, supporting one another, and seeking the Lord in unison.

The Word

4. Who were the Psalmist's special friends? Psalm 119:63.
5. What kind of communication should exist between those who have the same faith? Malachi 3:16.
6. What kind of fellowship was enjoyed by early Christians? Acts 2:1, 42.
7. What relationship with fellow believers is inevitable if we are walking in the true light of the Gospel? 1 John 1:7.

Explanation: The Psalmist said that he was a companion of those who revere God and keep His precepts. Malachi pointed out that believers communicate often with one another. The point is that those who have the same faith and are walking along the same Christian pathway will share their convictions and insights with one another on a regular basis. This is the kind of fellowship that was enjoyed by believers in the early Christian church, and the same fellowship is enjoyed by believers today. Your faith and understanding are a strength to other believers, and theirs is a strength to you.

This experience by which believers provide one another spiritual, intellectual, and emotional support is inevitable when they are walking in the light shed on their hearts by the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:7 is one of the most beautiful texts in the Bible: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

This does not make the Adventist Church a club. It is far more than that! It is a spiritual communion of those who have accepted the light of truth shed on their minds and hearts by Jesus Christ.

Relevance: The Lord is asking you to join in that spiritual communion and enjoy the enormous blessings of Christian fellowship.

III. The Church Is For Worship

Worship is adoration of the Lord. It is communion with Him, involving praise, pleading, and listening to His Word. Worship is when God lifts us in the heart into fellowship with Him. This is what Paul was speaking about when he wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

The Word

8. What are we all invited to do as an acknowledgment of our love for God? 1 Chronicles 16:29; 95:6.
9. What instruction are we given regarding believers assembling together for worship? Hebrews 10:25.
10. What two ingredients must always be present in true worship? John 4:24,
11. In our worship whose love and supremacy over our lives are we acknowledging? Why? Philippians 2:8-11.

Explanation: King David's injunction was that we "bring an offering and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." (1 Chronicles 16:29). These are the elements of true worship; it is an expression of gratitude to God from a heart that is filled with His holiness.

Assembling for worship by God's people has always been a vital part of church life. We are urged not to neglect such congregational worship, especially as we draw nearer to the second coming of Jesus (Hebrews 10:25). Individual worship in private is also an indispensable part of Christian life (Matthew 6:6). There is no substitute for personal devotional life, involving private prayer and Bible study. Only as we keep our appointments with God daily can we hope to have the spiritual power to be overcomers and to live as He directs. It is this personal devotional experience enjoyed by God's people that makes public worship a special blessing. When "the beauty of holiness" is received from the Lord by Christians individually, their collective worship is especially marked by the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus emphasized the same thought when He said that we must worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). When the Holy Spirit reigns in our hearts, we are able to enter fully into the true spirit of worship. And when we are committed to the truths revealed in God's Word, the Lord will give us increasingly meaningful understandings as we search, study and pray together.

The object of our worship is the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:8-11). Some believers become confused as to whether they should address their prayers to God or to Christ. The truth is that there is one God (Malachi 2:10): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that they are separate "Personalities," but the bond between them is so mysteriously close that it is true to say that there is only one God. When we pray to the Father, we are praying to the total Deity. When we pray to Jesus Christ, we are praying also to the Father and the Holy Spirit. (See Colossians 2:9). That is why Paul could say,

"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Philippians 2:10). Whether we are worshiping privately or in the church assembly, we have the wonderful privilege of speaking directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. His death, resurrection, and ascension have made it possible for us to be saved from sin, and it is entirely appropriate to address Him directly in gratitude and love.

Relevance: As you become a member of the church, you will have the joy of engaging in public worship on a regular basis. Your personal relationship with Christ, fostered by your own private devotional life, will make public worship with those of like faith a supreme pleasure and inspiration.

IV. The Church Is For Service

God has not given us the church merely so that we can support one another and engage in public worship services. These are very important aspects of church life, but there is more! One of the main reasons for church life and collective Christian experience is that together, we can do so much more in leading others to Christ than we could do working entirely alone.

The Word

12. What kind of service does Jesus expect of every believer? Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:20; (compare Ephesians 6:20).
13. How extensive is the preaching-teaching mission of the church to be? Matthew 28:18-20.
14. What other kind of assistance do people in the church provide? Luke 10:30-37.

Explanation: As members of the church, we are to be Christ's witnesses or ambassadors in every situation in which we find ourselves. The great commission is that the church is to take the Gospel to every inhabited part of the world. Everyone is to be given a chance to hear the story of the cross and the news that Jesus is returning soon to take the faithful to the heavenly Kingdom. The first angel's message of Revelation 14:6-7 is "the everlasting gospel" that in these last days is to be preached "to every nation, kindred, and tongue, and people." This message, which includes much emphasis on the pre-advent judgment and the sabbath, is designed to prepare people spiritually to meet Jesus when He returns. The second and third angels' messages (Revelation 14:8-12) are serious warnings to those who are aligning themselves with spurious ideas and practices. These two messages are intended to lead the honest in heart back to the experience described in the first angel's message. The task of church members is to cooperate with the Lord in proclaiming these messages to the world.

Preaching and teaching alone is not enough! Jesus gave great significance to personal and corporate service for those in need. His ministry of teaching was always associated with a ministry of healing and relieving distress. Love is manifested in action! That is the message of the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). Every member of Christ's Church is to be a good Samaritan. There are millions of people who will only listen to the Gospel message if it is demonstrated in works of love and caring.

Relevance: Are you as excited as we are about the task that Christ has given us to do? There is no work so rewarding and so demanding as that of leading souls to Christ! Will you join us in this thrilling enterprise?

V. Why Should You Be A Member Of God's Church?

Since the invitation for you to be a member comes from the Lord Himself, we will let Him answer this question.

The Word

15. Where is the truth to be found? 1 Timothy 3:15; (compare Isaiah 8:20).
16. What message of salvation will the true church teach? Ephesians 2:8-10.
17. What respect for God's commandments will the true church manifest? Romans 3:31; Revelation 12:17.
18. What counsel of Jesus will the true church follow? Matthew 24:20; (compare Exodus 20:8-11).
19. What message regarding the judgment will the true church teach? Revelation 3:5; Daniel 12:1.

20. What does the Seventh-day Adventist Church have to offer you? Ephesians 2:19.

Explanation: God's true church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). The source of truth is the Word of God, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Therefore, the true church is the one that follows the teachings of the Bible. You should be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church because it follows Bible teaching.

There are certain major aspects of Bible truth that the Seventh-day Adventist Church especially emphasizes:

1. The experience of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. The message is that you are not saved by works but by faith in Jesus. He brings conviction, you respond, and He gives you His saving grace. Then you wish to follow His will for your life because His love is reigning in your heart by the Holy Spirit.
2. The importance of keeping all the commandments of God. This message is found right throughout the Scriptures. Faith-grace results in your salvation. But Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Obedience to the law of God is an established principle in the life of the true follower of Christ (Romans 3:31; 8:3-4). And it is one of the distinctive characteristics of the last-day church (Revelation 12:17). That is why the Seventh-day Adventist Church emphasizes the importance of commandment-keeping as evidence of faith.
3. The true church of Jesus Christ will heed His command that "the Sabbath 'Should be kept right down to the second coming of Jesus. In the last days, spoken of in Matthew 24, God's people are to pray, as the Jewish Christians in A.D. 70 were to pray, that their flight from those who are persecuting them will not have to be on the Sabbath day (Matthew 24:20). Jesus wants us to keep His Sabbath as a day of spiritual rest and worship. The last part of the first angel's message emphasizes it: "Worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7) We worship the Creator on the day that He set aside as the memorial of His creative work (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11). Because the seventh-day Sabbath is God's holy day, you should belong to the church that honors it.
4. The true church of Jesus Christ will teach victory over Sin For faithful believers in this period of pre-advent Judgment" (Revelation 3:5; compare Revelation 14:7). People who receive the power for victory imparted by the Holy Spirit will have their names retained in the heavenly book of life (Revelation 12:1). Those professed believers who reject Christ's power for victory will have their names taken out of the book of life. That is the clear message of Scripture. Since the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches this vital last-day message, you should be a member of it!
5. The Seventh-day Adventist Church offers you a spiritual Fellowship that is closer and sweeter than anything to be found elsewhere. Why? Because God is especially present in that church that is following the teachings of His Word. "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). What a thrilling privilege to be one of God's saints and a member of His worldwide family. A saint is not a disembodied spirit in heaven. A saint, as defined in Scripture, is a genuine believer in Christ who, by His grace, is following all the counsels of God. You should be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church because this is God's family that is seeking to follow all of His will. This family can provide you with the spiritual love and support that you need so much as you progress toward the heavenly Kingdom.

Relevance: When would you like to be baptized as a sign of your new experience with Christ? And when would you like to be voted in as a member of the church? Usually the church votes at the time of a person's baptism. There never is any question about membership when the believer is presented as a candidate for baptism.

Again, we welcome you in advance as a member of God's family on earth! Your warm, wholehearted response to the love of Jesus and the truths of His Word has been a great encouragement to us! Now, we earnestly desire that you will join us in church membership and fellowship. Thank God for His wonderful love in leading you closer to Him! And thank God for the privilege of being together in this great enterprise of taking His last-day message to the world!

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. Jesus wants to have one church on earth.
 - b. We should always worship alone.
 - c. Worship involves assembling together.
 - d. Service is not just teaching; it includes helping those in need.
2. Discuss: What other aspects of the true church does the Seventh-day Adventist Church incorporate? What teachings, practices, and doctrines distinguish this church from other organizations? Why are these things important?