

## Each One Teach One Discipleship Lessons

### Part Four:

### FAITH THAT BUILDS UP

### Participating in the Church of God

## LESSON THIRTEEN:

## ONE NATION UNDER GOD

Exodus 19:5-6

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a *holy nation*.’ These are the words you [Moses] are to speak to the Israelites.”

*Nation:*

*A stable, historically-developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture, and language in common.*

\*\*\*\*\* The Israelites coming out of Egypt were actually a "family" (descended from Jacob) of slaves. The only thing they had that qualified them as a "nation" by the definition above was a common language. As slaves, they had no independent "economic life." Wandering in the wilderness, they had no territory. After 400 years in Egypt, they had evidently adapted to the Egyptian culture. Yet God promised to make them a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." They were given instructions that would create a distinctive, holy culture and a bountiful economic life. And they were on their way to their own "territory," the Promised Land of Palestine. If they fulfilled their part of the covenant, the Lord would make them an "example" for the whole world. They would be a holy, "priesthood nation" to intercede for all of mankind.

But the rest of the Old Testament is the tragic story of the failure of the Israelite nation to reap the blessings of the covenant, their failure to become that "priesthood nation."

Was the world to be left with no example?

**I Peter 2:9-10**

**But you [Christians] are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

\*\*\*\*\* Jesus Christ **is** your *personal Savior*. But many Christians don't seem to realize the implications of Peter's comment above. When you are baptized into the "Body of Christ" you are **not** an "only child," or a single brother or sister for Jesus. You become part of a vast family. Christians are not physically related to one another as the Israelites were. As Peter put it, we once were not a "people" (that is, a genetically related, unified nation-family.) But through the Blood of Jesus, we **are** now a "people," a nation-family. And the Lord's intent is that we become, through the **new** covenant, that holy, "priesthood nation" that is to be the "example" for the world. What is our modern word for that "nation"? It is **the Church!**

Many Christians are confused about what "the Church" really is, and what its role in their life should be. They think Church is a **place** you go, or a **physical organization**--like a club--that you join. When individuals answer an "altar call" at a mass evangelistic meeting, they are often advised at the end of the service by the evangelist to "go to the church of your choice" next week. And so, many take that advice literally. They set about to "choose" a "church" to go to, the same way they would choose a new car or a bank. They go "shopping" for a church! And some never stop "shopping":

## Yuppies of Bible Times

We don't, like, have One Religion or anything,  
but we do enjoy the Philistine Fellowship Suppers.

And we've been to the festivities at harvest time over  
at the Baal Temple, although I must say the icons at the  
Asherah Grove are more impressive at that time of year.

And, of course, our kids have really enjoyed the  
activities at the Molech Shrine since they hired that new  
youth director.



Unfortunately, it's not just "Yuppies"--in Old Testament times or now--who shop around. It seems many Christians of all segments of society want to check out where they can hear the best "praise music," enjoy the prettiest pulpit and pew decor, park the most conveniently, farm out their kids to the "hippest" youth directors. They want to go where they are offered the "best deal" in programs, and the least inconvenience. They want a schedule that will fit around their personal "life-style." They want the biggest return on the least investment of time, with minimal personal and emotional involvement.

\*\*\*\*\* It is time for the people of the Lord to stop shopping for a place to go! Early in the first century, all of the Christians in one locality were considered "the church," or, in Greek terms, the *ekklesia* --assembly of "called-out ones"--in that area. They would have been divided into congregations based on living near enough to one another to gather regularly. Sadly, it was not long before they became "divided" by other considerations-- arguments about who was in charge, arguments about details of doctrine, probably even arguments over whose home to meet in:

*I Cor 1:10-12*

*I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you \_\_\_\_\_ with one another so that there may be no \_\_\_\_\_ among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are \_\_\_\_\_ among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas {That is, Peter}"; still another, "I follow Christ."*

The problem started early in the church. But over the past 2,000 years, men have carved up the family of God even more, into artificial divisions we call "denominations." The Church has become a "nation divided against itself."

\*\*\*\*\* In the night he was betrayed, Jesus prayed to the Father:

*John 17:22-23*

*I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be \_\_\_\_\_ as we are \_\_\_\_\_: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to \_\_\_\_\_ to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them, even as you have loved me.*

\*\*\*\*\* At the very beginning of the Church, described early in the book of Acts, Jesus' prayer was answered for a short time:

*Acts 4:32*

*All the believers were \_\_\_\_\_ in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they \_\_\_\_\_.*

\*\*\*\*\* That kind of sharing and caring is the ideal in a family. Other scriptures also refer to the relationships in the church as being those of a family:

*I Timothy 3:14-15*

*Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in \_\_\_\_\_, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

*I Timothy 5:1-2*

*Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your \_\_\_\_\_. Treat younger men as \_\_\_\_\_, older women as \_\_\_\_\_, and younger women as \_\_\_\_\_, with absolute purity.*

We need to get back to the concept that the Church is a **family**: not the kind of "dysfunctional," dis-united family that is common in our society today, but a loving, unified family. Then that family can truly become the "priesthood nation" the Lord intended.

The Church is **not** a "place to go once a week." It is not an "activity center" to meet the social needs of various age groups. It is not even a collection of people who have agreed to gather together to do group "religious acts." The goal of the people in any fellowship that is a part of "The Church" should be to allow Christ to join them together as a **family**--the kind of family that **will be** the example that the world needs to see, a part of the "priesthood nation"--**ONE NATION UNDER GOD, INDIVISIBLE.**

## **REVIEW:**

1. The Church is to be a "**royal priesthood**," a "**holy nation**."
2. The Church is to be **united** under God.

3. The Church is to be a **family**.
4. A Church fellowship group is a part of the **larger family**.
5. Fellowship meetings should be **family get-togethers**.
6. The world needs to see the Family of God in **love and unity**.

**MEMORY VERSES:**

**LESSON THIRTEEN MEMORY VERSE:**

**I Pet 2:9**

**But you [Christians] are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,  
A people belonging to God,  
That you may declare the praises of him  
Who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**

**Previous Memory Verses:** Now that we are once again in a new four-lesson section, the memory verses from the previous twelve lessons will no longer be included on the review pages. But you are encouraged to continue to occasionally review them on your own to keep them fresh in your mind.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Have you ever "shopped" for a "church"? What did you look for?

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2. What was causing the divisions in Corinth that Paul warned against?

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3. Why do you think there is so much "shopping around" for churches?

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4. Acts 4 makes the early church sound "communist." What do you think was the difference between their way and Russian communism?

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5. What is the role of a "priest"?

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6. Write I Pet. 2:9 from memory:

But you are a chosen \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Fill in the blanks in these scripture quotes from past lessons:

... he that has the \_\_\_\_\_ has life

... without \_\_\_\_\_ it is impossible to please God

... the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

... set an \_\_\_\_\_ for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity