

The Apostles' Creed

Lesson 5

The Church

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

Our goal is to offer free Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by producing and globally distributing an unparalleled multimedia seminary curriculum in English, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Our curriculum is also being translated into more than a dozen other languages through our partner ministries. The curriculum consists of graphic-driven videos, printed instruction, and internet resources. It is designed to be used by schools, groups, and individuals, both online and in learning communities.

Over the years, we have developed a highly cost-effective method of producing award-winning multimedia lessons of the finest content and quality. Our writers and editors are theologically-trained educators, our translators are theologically-astute native speakers of their target languages, and our lessons contain the insights of hundreds of respected seminary professors and pastors from around the world. In addition, our graphic designers, illustrators, and producers adhere to the highest production standards using state-of-the-art equipment and techniques.

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CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE	1
NOTES	2
I. INTRODUCTION (1:01).....	2
II. SANCTION (3:26).....	2
A. Old Testament (6:18).....	3
B. Jesus (12:42).....	3
C. Implications (19:23).....	4
1. Purpose (20:28).....	4
2. Believers and Unbelievers (22:45).....	4
3. Obligations (24:55).....	4
III. HOLY (31:52).....	5
A. Definition (33:24).....	5
B. People (40:41).....	5
1. Visible Church (43:02).....	6
2. Invisible Church (47:48).....	6
IV. CATHOLIC (52:00).....	7
A. Definition (52:21).....	7
B. Visible Catholic Church (57:21).....	7
C. Invisible Catholic Church (1:05:23).....	8
1. One Savior (1:06:04).....	8
2. One Religion (1:08:44).....	8
V. COMMUNION (1:14:55).....	9
A. Visible Church (1:16:41).....	9
1. Means of Grace (1:17:02).....	9
2. Spiritual Gifts (1:21:27).....	10
3. Material Goods (1:23:56).....	10
B. Invisible Church (1:26:50).....	10
1. Union with Christ (1:27:01).....	10
2. Union with Believers (1:31:26).....	11
VI. CONCLUSION (1:35:11).....	11
REVIEW QUESTIONS	12
APPLICATION QUESTIONS	17
GLOSSARY	18

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (1:01)

In the Apostles' Creed, the word "church" refers first and foremost to the people of God.

When the Creed says, "we believe in the church" it does not mean that we trust the church for salvation.

II. Sanction (3:26)

In the broadest sense, the church is:

- God's kingdom on earth
- The congregation of his special people
- The central means through which he dispenses grace
- Critical to establishing and maintaining our relationship with God

God created the church for a purpose and vested it with authority.

A. Old Testament (6:18)

The concept of the church in the New Testament finds its roots in the Old Testament.

The assembly of Israel was the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament church.

B. Jesus (12:42)

Jesus built his church in a way that relied on but also advanced the Old Testament church.

Jesus came to rescue and restore Israel in the form of the New Testament church.

C. Implications (19:23)

There is fundamental continuity between Israel in the Old Testament and the Christian church in the New Testament.

1. Purpose (20:28)

- to turn the world into God's earthly kingdom

2. Believers and Unbelievers (22:45)

- both assemblies include believers and unbelievers

3. Obligations (24:55)

- love God

- spread his kingdom

- bring him glory

III. Holy (31:52)

The words "holy," "sanctified" and "saints" come from the same word group.

A. Definition (33:24)

Morally pure:

- free from sin and corruption

Set apart for use in special service to God:

- things can be holy even if they are not morally pure

B. People (40:41)

The Bible refers to people as holy when they are set apart in order to be useful to God.

1. Visible Church (43:02)

Everyone who is regularly part of the gathered church:

- Confirmed in God's covenant
- Have or profess faith in Christ
- Submit to the teaching of the church
- Have a believing parent or spouse

2. Invisible Church (47:48)

Those who have been united to Christ in salvation (true church).

Only God can identify the invisible church with full certainty.

The church needs to hear the gospel on a regular basis.

IV. Catholic (52:00)

A. Definition (52:21)

Catholic:

- Universal: including all Christians in all congregations
- From Latin "*catholicus*" (Greek: whole, complete)
- Not a reference to the Roman Catholic Church
- Description of unity that exists between all churches that faithfully follow Christ

The Apostles' Creed is talking about the unity of the Holy Spirit that exists between all legitimate Christian churches.

- inclusive

Later, the church was fragmented by divisions.

- exclusive

B. Visible Catholic Church (57:21)

Definition: One worldwide fellowship of all people in covenant with God under the headship of Christ.

Marks of the church:

- Word

- Sacraments

- Discipline

C. Invisible Catholic Church (1:05:23)

Definition: all people from all ages who have been united to Christ for salvation.

1. One Savior (1:06:04)

Jesus Christ is the only savior available to humanity.

2. One Religion (1:08:44)

There is only one true religion that can lead us to Christ.

Salvation is not ordinarily possible for those outside the visible church.

V. Communion (1:14:55)*Koinonia:*

- the fellowship that exists between members of the church

- sharing
 - material goods and money

 - gospel (within the church)

Communion:

- Fellowship between members of the church
- sharing of things we possess in common
- mutual dependence

A. Visible Church (1:16:41)**1. Means of Grace (1:17:02)**

Tools or mechanisms that God ordinarily uses to apply grace to his people:

- Word
- Sacraments
- Prayer

2. Spiritual Gifts (1:21:27)

The Holy Spirit uses all spiritual gifts for the purpose of building up the visible church.

Spiritual gifts are shared by the entire visible church.

- Public worship services
- Build up the entire church
- Sign for unbelievers
- Unbelievers are condemned

3. Material Goods (1:23:56)

In the Bible and early church, Christians shared their material goods with others who were in need.

B. Invisible Church (1:26:50)**1. Union with Christ (1:27:01)**

Jesus dwells in believers and they dwell in him.

This union involves both our bodies and our spirits.

2. Union with Believers (1:31:26)

Believers are united to one another in Christ.

Our union with the visible church is relational and experiential; our union with the invisible church is spiritual and ontological.

The communion of the invisible church is not limited to the church on earth.

Scripture draws many applications from the fact that believers are united in Christ.

VI. Conclusion (1:35:11)

3. What are some of the implications of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament church?

4. Define and discuss the word “holy” as it is used in the Bible.

5. What does the Bible mean when it uses the word “holy” to describe the people of God?

6. Define and describe the word “catholic” as it was understood in the Apostles’ Creed.

7. What is the visible catholic church, and how do we decide which churches should be embraced as part of the catholic or universal church of Christ?

8. Discuss the invisible catholic church and how it differs from the visible catholic church.

Application Questions

1. How is the church critical to maintaining a relationship with God?
2. In what ways have you experienced God's grace in the church community?
3. Some of us can be tempted to think of the church as being primarily a building. How ought the church, as the congregation of God's people, help us to avoid this problem?
4. In what ways can you participate in the purpose of the church to turn the world into God's earthly kingdom?
5. In what ways do you see that the church needs to be set apart (holy) from the world?
6. If only God ultimately knows who is in the invisible church, how should we treat those who are not yet believers?
7. Since the church is "catholic" or "universal" how should we think of other churches that hold to the Apostles' Creed?
8. What benefits can church discipline have in a congregation?
9. How have you experienced the fellowship of the church?
10. What are three ways you can use your gifts to benefit your church community?
11. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

Glossary

catholic – Term meaning "universal"; used in the Apostles' Creed to describe the church as including all believers, from all places, throughout all of history

church – The covenant people of God; his congregation; the visible manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth

Clement of Rome – (A.D. 30-100) Early church father and Bishop of Rome who wrote *1 Clement*, an influential letter to the Corinthian Christians in the first century

Cyprian – (ca. 200 - 258) Bishop of Carthage in the third century who wrote that traditional teachings of the church should not have more authority than the Scriptures

ecclesia/ekklesia – Greek term (transliteration) for "assembly," "people of God," "church"

hagiazō – Greek word (transliteration) meaning "to make holy," "consecrate," "sanctify"

hagios – Greek word (transliteration) for "holy" or "set apart"

holy – Morally pure; set apart for use in special service to God

invisible church – All people throughout time that have been united to Christ for salvation

Knox, John – (ca. 1505-1572) Scottish Reformer who established the Presbyterian church of Scotland

koinonia – Greek word (transliteration) meaning "communion" or "fellowship"; used in reference to the New Testament church

qadosh – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning "holy," "sanctified," "sacred"

Spurgeon, Charles – (1834-1892) 19th century British pastor and writer; often called the "Prince of Preachers"

visible church – People that are regularly part of the gathered church; those who publicly profess faith in Christ but may or may not have true saving faith

Wesley, John – (1703-1791) Anglican minister and theologian; one of the founders of the Methodist Church

Westminster Shorter Catechism – A traditional Protestant summary of Christian teaching, originally published in 1647