General Church Education

The Christian Church

Lesson 6

The Five Churches

For ages 11-13

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The Christian Church

Teacher Background

The Lord established the Christian Church while living on earth and the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the faith of Rome. This halted the persecution of Christians. However, Constantine sanctioned the idea of three Persons in the Godhead and denounced all who disagreed as heretics. This alienated people from God. In time, the Catholic Church decided that only Catholics could be saved. Protestants weakened this idea and restored the Word to the people. But then people began to believe they could be saved by faith alone. This inaccurate idea made it necessary for the Lord to come again.

Focus Points

- Christianity spread rapidly under Constantine, but disagreements split the church into two.
- The Protestant Reformation changed Christianity by restoring the Word to the people.
- The Christian Church declined due to doctrinal errors, so the Lord needed to come again.

Readings from the Writings

"'Being the Lord's disciple' means 'being led by Him and not by self, thus by the good and the truths which come from the Lord." *Arcana Coelestia* 10490.6

The Trinity of persons was unknown to the Apostolic church, but was the invention of the Council of Nicaea, leading to its introduction into the Roman Catholic church, and thus to the churches which split from it. The Trinity as defined by the Council of Nicaea and by Athanasius caused a faith to arise which perverted the whole Christian church. This is the source of the abomination of desolation which the Lord predicted in Daniel, the Gospels and Revelation. See *True Christian Religion* 163

The Lord provides that there should always be on earth a church where the Word is read and thus the Lord becomes known. Therefore when the Word was more or less rejected the Reformation took place, and so the Word was, so to speak, dragged out of its hiding place and put to use. See *True Christian Religion* 270

In Providence the Reformation came about so that the Word could be made available to people once again. See *Invitation to the New Church* 24

I was allowed to see how the Last Judgment took place from beginning to end and how the new heaven was formed, and the new church meant by the New Jerusalem was set up in the heavens. It started at the beginning of 1757, and was fully completed by the end of the year. See *Last Judgment* 45

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Teacher Activity Overview

The student lesson offers the following activity choices:

Projects and Activities (see back of book for answers)

The Early Middle Ages

The early Middle Ages was a time of great change following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. Learn about Queen Bertha, who restored Christianity to Britain, and create a decorative design in the style of the early Middle Ages that could be used on a book, a building or an article of clothing.

Match Heroes of the Reformation with Their Accomplishments

Look a list that names some heroes of the Reformation. Match each name with their heroic deeds by drawing a line a name to an action. If you are unsure what a person did, look them up to complete the activity.

Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and the Five Churches

Discover king Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its relation to the Five Churches by cutting out, assembling, and arranging five cubes to illustrate the story. Print on sturdy paper to use throughout these lessons. Online at https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/project-nebuchadnezzars-dream-and-the-five-churches-daniel-2-true-christian-religion-760.pdf

A Chart of the Five Churches

Complete a chart showing symbols which represent the five churches. Fill in the chart as you finish each lesson. Available at https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/five-churches-chart-daniel-02.pdf

The Five Churches Statue Twist

Create a model of Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue and twist the statue to match each segment with one of the five churches, a major figure in the Word, a time of the day, a season of the year, an age of a person's life, and various metals to which it corresponds. Available at https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-the-five-churches-statue-twist.pdf

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The Christian Church

Vocabulary

apostle—a person who is sent on a mission
disciple—a person who follows and spreads the teaching of another
heresy—an opinion or belief that contradicts what is generally accepted

Introduction

The Lord established the Christian Church through His life on earth. Early in the Lord's ministry He chose twelve disciples and taught them how to baptize, teach, heal and perform miracles in His name. Then after His resurrection, He sent them out into the world to start the Christian church. He commanded them to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

To begin with Christians lived simple charitable lives, openly preaching and practicing their religion. However, the Jews and Romans began to persecute them, so they chose to worship in secret. In spite of taking such precautions, many were martyred for their beliefs. All this changed when the Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian and issued an edict protecting Christian worship. After this, Christianity spread rapidly.

A New Idea of God (300-600 AD)

By the 4th century AD, people who had dedicated their lives to building the Christian Church no longer shared the same idea of Jesus Christ. Arius argued that Jesus was created by the Father and so inferior to Him, while Athanasius taught that Jesus was the eternal Son of God. To settle the matter, Constantine gathered a council of bishops in Nicaea in 325 AD. The leaders issued an edict stating that God was made up of three distinct divine Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The proclamation introduced the idea of three gods of heaven and earth, in place of One God and labeled other ideas "heresy".



The Council of Nicaea

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cesare_Nebbia_Concile_de_Nic%C3%A9e_(1560).jpg *Ouverture du Concile de Nicée (325) par l'Empereur Constantin Ier le Grand* [Accessed 6 June 2025]

The Writings tell us that having a correct idea of God is essential because it affects all other beliefs. So, accepting this false view of God affected all the religious beliefs of the Christian church.

Early Middle Ages (c. 476-1000 AD)

Within several hundred years, the Christian church split into two organizations. The bishop of Constantinople led an

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Eastern Orthodox church, while the Pope led the Western Roman Catholic Church. These organizations constantly disagreed. As the Roman Empire weakened, Islamic (Muslim) religion arose in the Holy Land. Then, during the late 700s AD, Charlemagne emerged as a strong leader and created an expansive empire in Western and Central Europe. Charlemagne introduced reforms such as education for all.

Middle Ages (c. 476-1453 AD)

During the Middle Ages, Christians tried to overturn Muslim control of the Holy Land by launching religious wars or crusades. While many European Christians went off to fight in these wars, others made religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

At around this time, the Catholic Church started saying that people who were not members of the church could not go to heaven. People worried that they might be thrown out of the church (excommunicated) for disobeying its leaders. Then in time, the Catholic church prevented people from reading the Word. The priests read it in Latin, which most people could not understand. The Catholic church also emphasized ritual, and claimed that people could be saved by buying "indulgences" or paying the church. So it became harder for people to know the Lord.

Renaissance (c. 1400s-1600s AD)

After this, people began to explore new approaches to reasoning by investigating science and philosophy. Due to this, learning and the arts revived. For example, the great sculptor and painter Michelangelo (1475-1564) transformed Western art. The author William Shakespeare (1564-1616) changed Western literature. The scientist Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) identified the sun as the center of our solar system and started the modern science of astronomy. The term "Renaissance man" springs from the remarkable artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), who made many anatomical, engineering, geological and optical discoveries.

Quine, T. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Very_early_printing_press_with_ink_dauber_(25707860946).jpg [Accessed 6 June 2025]



Early Printing Press

Protestant Reformation (1500s AD)

In 1517, a German priest named Martin Luther rejected Roman Catholicism and protested against the wrong ideas and practices of the church. This act, and other similar acts, changed Christianity. The reforms that were brought about also prepared people for the Lord's Second Coming.

The reformers wanted to return to a simpler life and to bring the Word back to the people by translating it into spoken languages. Luther translated the Word into German. John Wycliffe and William Tyndale translated it into English. Then in 1456 Johannes Gutenberg invented movable type. This made it cheaper and faster to print copies of the Bible.

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Following this, Thomas Cranmer, put together worship services in English. However, the Protestant Reformation split the Christian Church and divided large European empires into the modern nation-state system of today.


Wycliffe Bible

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e8/Wycliffe_new_testament.png [Accessed 6 June 2025]

Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603 AD)

When Elizabeth I became the queen of England, she allowed greater religious freedom than ever before. Her father, King Henry VIII, had established the Church of England and placed Bibles in every church. But Elizabeth's sister Queen Mary I reversed this and persecuted the Protestant leaders. However, when Elizabeth became queen, she restored the Bible and many people learned to read it themselves. She also defeated attempts to restore Catholicism, such as the Spanish Armada (1588), and brought the nation order and prosperity. Her peaceful reign likewise affected the future of religion in the North American colonies because the English settlers supported religious freedom.

Decline of the Christian Church

While the Protestant Church gave the Word back to the people and reduced the power of the Catholic Church, the Writings explain that the heresies which crept into Christianity meant that it gradually declined. For example, some thought that people could go to heaven by simply believing in Jesus Christ and did not need to do what He taught. Others believed that people could not choose their eternal home, but were destined for heaven or hell from birth. Then, scientific advances led some people to trust science more than religion. So, Christians no longer had an accurate understanding of the Lord and could not see the path to heaven. Consequently, the Lord once again needed to reveal the truth so people could be saved.

Last Judgment (1757 AD)

At the end of the Christian Church the Lord gave humankind a new revelation through the Writings for the New Church. After Swedenborg started publishing this revelation he witnessed the Last Judgment on the Christian Church. The events he saw did not take place in the natural world, as people expected, but in the spiritual world. There, Swedenborg saw the prophecies in the book of Revelation being fulfilled.

The Christian Church in Our Lives

The truths in the New Testament changed the world. By coming to earth as Jesus Christ, God helped us picture His Divine Humanity. He showed us how to live the life that leads to heaven and invited us to walk in His footsteps and become His disciples. The New Testament also reintroduced the idea that marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman, and the love of each person should be given freely in marriage.

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Activity Overview

Projects and Activities (answers at back of book)

Choose one or two.

The Early Middle Ages

The early Middle Ages was a time of great change following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. Learn about Queen Bertha, who restored Christianity to Britain, and create a decorative design in the style of the early Middle Ages that could be used on a book, a building or an article of clothing.

Match Heroes of the Reformation with Their Accomplishments

Look a list that names some heroes of the Reformation. Match each name with their heroic deeds by drawing a line a name to an action. If you are unsure what a person did, look them up to complete the activity.

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The Early Middle Ages

The Early Middle Ages began after Rome collapsed in 476 AD. The decline began in 376 AD when many people fled to Rome for safety but were too powerful for the Romans to control. Then in 395AD, the empire was divided into two. The final blow fell when the emperor of the Western Empire died.


Beeley Cross, Bakewell

After the collapse of Rome groups of Anglo-Saxons and Vikings moved to new parts of Europe. These groups displaced local cultures and mixed pagan beliefs with Christianity. Languages changed as people settled in new areas. These changes localized people's outlooks. Without the powerful Roman government it was more dangerous to travel. Trade routes, social ties, and literacy gradually broke down. Many people died in epidemics, and populations declined.

In Britain, missionaries landed in the kingdom of Kent in 597 AD where Bertha, a Christian woman, had married King Ethelbert, a pagan, on the condition that she could practice her religion. A former Roman church was restored so Bertha could worship. St. Martin's church is the oldest Christian church in the English-speaking world. Through Bertha, Christianity slowly returned to Britain. Bertha's husband was the first English king to convert to Christianity. Soon, churches sprang up across the land. Ethelbert provided land for a church in Canterbury. Today, it is known as Canterbury Cathedral. It is the headquarters of the Church of England.


Queen Bertha

This statue shows Bertha wearing clothing typical of the early Middle Ages. Note the beautiful woven design on her dress. Similar designs were used to decorate books, stonework, and graves, such as the one above.

Create a Design

Use a blank sheet of paper to create a design that could be worn on an article of clothing, carved into a cross or building, or used as a decorative border for a book. While neither of the examples shown are colored, you can use bright colors to highlight your work.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertha_of_Kent#/media/File:Stephen_Melton's_Queen_Bertha_statue,_Lady_Wootton's_Green,_Canterbury_-_geograph.org.uk_-_5055992.jpg [Accessed 6 June 2025]

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Match Heroes of the Reformation with Their Accomplishments

Below is a list of people whose efforts accomplished the Protestant renewal of Christianity. Match each hero with the action they took by drawing a line from a person to the action. If you are unsure of any answers, look up the reformers to complete the activity.

1. John Wycliffe (1328-1384)	a. invented the mechanical movable-type printing press.
2. Johannes Gutenberg (1393-1406)	b. provided that an English copy of the Bible was set up in every church for all to read.
3. Martin Luther (1483-1546)	c. wrote the first English liturgy, the *Book of Common Prayer*.
4. Henry VIII (1491-1547), King of England	d. translated the Latin Bible into German.
5. William Tyndale (1494-1536)	e. the first to translate the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament into English from Greek.
6. Thomas Cranmer (1533-1556)	f. restored the protestant religion in England.
7. Elizabeth I (1533-1603), Queen of England	g. argued the Bible was the center of Christianity and was the first to translate the Bible from Latin into English.

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Answers

Lesson 6

Match Heroes of the Reformation with their Accomplishments

1. g, 2. a, 3. d, 4. b, 5. e, 6. c, 7. f.