**DIDACHE:**

**Session 10**

**A Brief Survey of the History of the Christian Church**

**Summary of Session 9:**

**\*God did not create His human creatures to live in isolation from each other.**

**As Christians we confess that the Holy Spirit has called us not only**

**as individuals into a personal relationship with the Triune God, but**

**that calling to faith brings us into a community of believers, the**

**Church. In the Bible the Church is called the “body of Christ,” that**

**is, all people whom the Spirit, by the Means of Grace (Word and**

**Sacraments), has gathered to Christ in faith throughout the world.**

**\*The word “church” is used in a number of ways: properly speaking, it**

**refers to all those who believe in Jesus Christ, it can also refer**

**to an individual congregation, to a denomination, and even to a**

**physical building and campus. These are all legitimate uses because**

**Christians are found within them.**

**\*The Christian Church is unique from all other human communities and**

**groups in the following ways:**

**--The Church is the only community in the world in which there is**

**salvation from sin, Satan, and death; it is the only global**

**community that is guaranteed to prevail to the very end of**

**the world; it is the only community among us that is united**

**in a true spiritual way, in a sense invisible to the human**

**senses, because it is perennially composed of all who believe**

**in Jesus Christ, who comes to them in Word and Sacrament.**

***The Church is ONE. . .***

**--The Church is the only community in the world where sinners can**

**receive daily forgiveness of sins from God Himself, the only**

**community whose members receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**

**to dwell within them, thereby making them holy in God’s**

**sight, by virtue of the holiness of Jesus and not by their own**

**good works and piety.**

***The Church is One, HOLY. . .***

**--The Head of the whole global Church is Jesus Christ Himself**

***The Church is one, holy, CATHOLIC (universal, global) or***

***CHRISTIAN. . .***

**--Only the Church has a foundation on: the very Person of Christ;**

**on His Work while in the flesh during His entire lifetime, His**

**public ministry, His suffering and death, His resurrection and**

**ascension into His heavenly home, from where He now rules**

**all things; and on the testimony of Jesus’ apostles, whose**

**witness is preserved in the Holy Scriptures.**

***The Church is one, holy, Christian, and APOSTOLIC Church!***

**\*The special authority called in the Scriptures “the office and power of the**

**keys of the kingdom of heaven” is given by Christ Himself to His**

**Church on earth. It is the authority to forgive the sins of repentant**

**sinners whom the Holy Spirit has given faith and called them by the**

**Gospel to become children of God. Likewise it is the authority to**

**withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not**

**repent.**

**\*The people of God, all true believers in Christ, are described in the Holy**

**Scriptures as *the royal priesthood of all believers, ambassadors for***

***Christ, and the salt and light of the world.* The call, duty, management**

**(stewardship), responsibility, and privilege of carrying out Christ’s**

**own continuing mission and ministry on earth are given to, expected**

**of, and shared by all Christians. Out of this *priesthood of all believers***

**God calls men into the *Office of the Holy Ministry (also called the***

***Office of the Public Ministry)* to lead His Church in carrying out the**

**mission and ministry entrusted to them. These men are known as**

**priests and pastors. This is the only office in the Church that is**

**divinely instituted. All other offices, positions, and roles of church**

**workers are of human arrangement to assist the divinely instituted**

**office that is ordained by God’s design for order and blessing in the**

**Church. The pastor is not the chief executive officer, the head coach,**

**the boss over the congregation; he is not to *lord it over the people* in**

**the way that earthly executives rule. He is to model Christ and His**

**apostles as a servant-leader. Neither is the pastor the hired hand,**

**the employee, the facilitator, or a community organizer for the**

**congregation. Scripture commands the Church to respect and obey**

**their leaders when they proclaim, teach, and counsel faithfully**

**according to the Word. Pastors and people work together under the**

**Word of God, bringing great blessings to the Church.**

**\*The Christian life is a life of repentance, of a daily confession of sins, and**

**by faith the reception of God’s forgiveness, pardon, and absolution.**

**The Christian life is a life characterized by respect for the will and**

**commandments of God; the Ten Commandments serve as a**

**wonderful guide for loving God and for showing Christ-like love for**

**fellow human beings. The Christian life is a life of prayer, and Jesus’**

**gift of a model prayer—the Lord’s Prayer—teaches us what prayer**

**is (and what it is not), and how to pray.**

**\*Epistemology is the technical theological and philosophical study of the**

**nature and sources of truth. The basic epistemological question is**

**“What is truth? Is it absolute or relative?”**

**--There are many definition attempts to describe truth: facts; the body of**

**real things, events, and facts; judgments, propositions, or ideas**

**that are true or accepted as true; the body of true statements and**

**propositions; being in accord with fact or reality; the opposite of**

**falsehood.**

**--It is obvious that when we humans use language and words to define the**

**concept and idea of truth, it is quite a subjective and relative thing.**

**How much more relative our actual pronouncements of truth! And**

**science—in formulating its definitions of hypothesis, theory, fact,**

**and natural law—recognizes that all propositions and conclusions**

**must be open to new discoveries and evidence. Christians, too, must**

**not confuse the definition of truth, and must be the first to recognize**

**that human truths and doctrines are subjective and relative. (A**

**good illustration of this is in the field of medicine and medical**

**research. Not only are improvements continuously being found,**

**but some treatments, cures, and prescriptions once thought to be**

**helpful are later discovered to have dangerous side effects and to**

**have actually cost lives.)**

**--However throughout history and globally, human beings who think**

**existentially, (who believe this material world and this human life**

**span on earth may not be all that there is), also believe in the**

**possibility of a truth that is absolute and not of human origin.**

**Religious definitions of truth mostly center around a truth that has**

**its source in the existence of God. Ancient Greek culture, for**

**example, defined truth as an “un-concealment,” a revealing or**

**bringing of what was previously hidden into the open. The New**

**Testament writers used this definition and the very Greek word**

***aletheia*. Absolute truth can only come from an absolute and**

**eternal Divine Being, who has chosen to reveal such truth to**

**humanity. Plato defined God as Truth and Truth as God. The**

**apostles proclaimed, as Christians have for two thousand years,**

**a better message with the Good News (Gospel revelation) that**

**God is not abstract or merely spiritual—He has become**

**human in Jesus of Nazareth! Jesus and His Word are truth!**

**\*Christians share this Good News that God has revealed Himself in two**

**covenants He Himself has made with humanity. In His first**

**covenant, He commanded His Word of truths to be recorded by His**

**own chosen prophets in 39 documents; in His second covenant, He**

**also chose apostles and evangelists to record His Word of truths in**

**connection with the coming into human flesh of His Son. 27 more**

**documents preserve these absolute truths. These 66 books are**

**bound together in the Holy Bible.**

**\*The Bible teaches about itself that the Third Person of the Triune God, the**

**Holy Spirit, inspired the authors of the books of the Bible, in such a**

**manner that the very words, sentences, and thoughts written are**

**without error and totally and completely infallible.**

**This is why Christians say the Bible is absolute truth.**

**\*Christians realize that other world religions and cults claim to have such**

**direct revelations from God instead of or in addition to the Bible.**

**Hindus and Buddhists claim countless numbers of written texts and**

**spiritual guides that bring enlightenment through absolute spiritual**

**truths discovered by spiritual guides, gurus and teachers. Muslims**

**claim the final and most authoritative revelation from God is the**

**Koran, which includes selected truths and prophets from the Bible,**

**while omitting many others. God’s final prophet was Muhammad**

**of Mecca in Arabia. The founding prophet, Joseph Smith, and The**

**Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints claims God has given**

**the final divine revelation in the Book of Mormon, The Pearl of Great**

**Price, Smith’s own translation of the Bible, and the continuing direct revelations to its Presidents, all as absolute truths from God. There are even some Christian theologies that claim the Holy Spirit is still giving direct revelation to certain “charismatically-gifted” pastors and evangelists of the Church.**

**\*Christians who adhere to the text of the Bible as the Word of God, and hold**

**it alone to be the supreme and sole authority in matters of doctrine**

**and divine truth, subjecting the gift of human reason, and all other**

**traditions and human rites to its ultimate authority, also reject the**

**false claims of authorities and truths that contradict, take away, or**

**add to it.**

**OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION—SESSION 10**

**Introduction**

**In this session we will briefly take a glimpse at the different eras of Christian Church history. Two thousand years is an inexhaustible, life-long study, so indeed it is just a quick look that we will attempt in this presentation. The purpose of such a**

**quick (and impossible!) survey is to merely illustrate for the participant that Jesus is keeping His promise that *not even the gates of hell shall prevail against His Church.***

**I. The Apostolic Age A.D. 30-100**

**II. The Early Church Era A.D. 100-470**

**III. The Medieval Era A.D. 470-1517**

**IV. The Reformation Era**

1. **Martin Luther (Wittenberg, Germany)**
2. **Ulrich Zwingli (Basel, Switzerland)**
3. **John Calvin (Geneva, Switzerland)**
4. **The Radical Reformation**
5. **The English Reformation**
6. **Henry VIII The Tudor Dynasty**
7. **Bloody Mary**
8. **Elizabeth**
9. **The Stuart Dynasty**
10. **John Knox, Presbyterians in Scotland**
11. **The Puritans and the Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell**
12. **The Restoration and Parliament’s Rise to Power**

**V. American Christianity**

**A) Colonial religion**

**B) The Great Awakening**

**C) Revolutionary Religion**

**D) Religious Freedom and Denominational Development**

**E) Religion in the Age of Expansion**

**1. The Divide: Prejudice and Progress vs. slavery and the 1830**

**Indian Removal Act**

1. **Civil War Religion and Abraham Lincoln’s Call to Repentance**
2. **Religion in the Reconstruction Era--Emigration**
3. **Religion in the Gilded Age**
4. **Religion in the Age of Industrialization, Liberal Christianity, and**

**the era of World Wars and Depression**

**F) The Revitalization of Evangelical Christianity in the 1950s**

**G) The Counterculture Revolution and its Impact on Christianity**

**1) The Decade of the 1960s and the Promotion of Eastern Religion,**

**New Age Spirituality, Cults, and Atheism**

**2) The Era of Movements: Contemporary Liturgical, Ecumenical,**

**Charismatic, Church Growth, Emerging Church, Progressive**

**Christianity**

1. **Universalism**
2. **Situation Ethics**
3. **Orthodox Apologetics and Confessionalism**

**VI. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod**

**A) Emigration and Founding Fathers (Stephan, Walther, Loehe)**

**B) 1847 Creation of Synod**

**C) Confessional/Liturgical/Sacramental: Education/Publishing House/**

**Mission**

**D) Growth and Expansion of Membership (Emigration) and Structure**

**(Districts of Synod)**

**E) Theological Controversies**

**1) Within**

**a. Polity (Walther, Loehe, and Grabau)**

**b. Election**

**c. Bible (historical critical methodology)**

**d. Political (1968—current)**

**2) Without**

**a. Synodical Conference**

**b. LCA/ALC/LCMS/Wisconsin Synod dialogus**

**c. Church-State issues**

**Conclusion**

**What the future holds only God knows. What will American Christianity look like in A.D. 2030? Will its numbers continue to decrease? Will the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly guaranteed in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution still be in effect? Could Christianity in America ever face the persecution that Christians in other parts of the world have suffered for the sake of Christ and His Gospel? How will God answer our prayers for preserving His Church in America and strengthening its faithfulness to His Word and will? We wait on the Lord! But we Christians know God is in control, and that He will be with us and sustain us no matter what life brings. And we know that ultimately the victory of the Church over the world is a done deal. *Even the gates of hell shall not prevail* against God’s people!**