

## TEACHER GUIDE

### TELL Bible Pathway

#### Part 1

#### Lesson 19



The Holy Christian Church/The Visible and Invisible Church | [tellnetwork.org](http://tellnetwork.org)

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**Lesson Goal:** The goal of this class is to learn about the holy Christian Church—or the invisible church— and where it had its origin.

**Pre-Lesson Preparation:** Read the story in Revelation 7:9-14.

Who were the people in white robes?

Where did they come from?

Who are “the holy Christian Church” and “the communion of saints”? Why are they sometimes called the “invisible church”?

Read Ephesians 1:3-8.

Where did the holy Christian Church have its origin?

Read Galatians 5:9. Why is it important to remember this passage when looking for a congregation to join?

**Live Class** Greet those who are listening to the class.

**Prayer** Asks for God’s blessings, focusing on the theme of the lesson, and effectively ending the greeting time and calling the lesson to order. The following prayer can be used:

*Dear Holy Spirit, we thank you for gathering all believers together into the body of Christ, and we thank you for leaders, congregations, and denominations that teach your Word in its truth and purity. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

#### Introduce The Course

- a. Explain the purpose of the course.
- b. Ask all to show respect for the teacher and other students by writing appropriate questions and comments on the Facebook Live chat.
- c. Explain that the **TELL** method is a teaching style with the goal of telling others what you’ve learned. The letters **T-E-L-L** represent four sections of study: **T** for Think, **E** for Evaluate, **L** for Learn and **L** for Lead.

**Think: A powerful introduction that gets you thinking about an interesting topic, or question**

I'm sure you've seen pictures of different types of churches—from grass huts to little white country churches to grand cathedrals—from places all over the world like Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. These churches are called visible churches—and are certainly not invisible. You've probably heard about many different denominations and branches of Christianity. What do we make of them, and how do they connect to the invisible church we are going to learn about today?

**Evaluate (brings more meaning and context to the lesson)**

1. Who are the characters in the story? *John (Jesus' beloved disciple), a great multitude of believers in heaven, Jesus (the Lamb), angels, the elders, the four living creatures*
2. What are the objects in this story? *White robes, palm branches, throne, four creatures*
3. Where does this story happen? *John was given the vision by Jesus, likely while John was in exile on the Island of Patmos. The vision shows images of heaven.*
4. When does this story happen? *John recorded his vision, or "revelation," around the mid-90s A.D. He addressed his book of Revelation to the seven churches in Asia.*
5. What is the problem? *The Revelation of John describes the spiritual battle that believers are embroiled in while on earth—the battle between the holiness of God and the evil of the devil*
6. What events happened in this story? *John, son of Zebedee and Jesus' beloved disciple, was given a revelation by Jesus about coming events. In this story, John sees a great multitude of believers from every nation in the world. They were in heaven in front of God's throne, praising him and praising the Lamb, Jesus. One of the elders asked John who the people were, and where they came from. The elder then said that the people were those who had come out of "the great tribulation," whose robes were made white and washed clean by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus).*
7. Is the problem solved? *While believers will be in a spiritual battle against the devil and their sinful flesh until the day they die and enter heaven, they can be assured that Jesus has already won the battle. He is more powerful than the devil and all of his evil forces. Our salvation is secure. The book of Revelation is an encouragement to endure suffering, knowing that eternal triumph is to come.*

**Learn (identify that sin is the problem and only God has the answer)**

1. What is the main theme of the lesson? *In his vision, John saw believers from all nations and tribes and people and languages gathered around God's throne, worshiping him. All of these believers are our spiritual family. They are referred to as "the holy Christian Church" and the "communion of saints." They are also known as "the invisible church" because only God can see the heart and the faith of the people who are in it. At the end of the world, like in John's vision, all believers from all time and from all places will gather around the throne of God and worship him.*
2. What sin does this lesson teach you to confess? *Our sin of thinking that only people who look like me and talk like me and have the same skin color as me can be saved. It's not our job to read hearts. We trust God to know his people, and he will make it public knowledge on the last day. This group of believers is holy and are called saints because of the redemptive work of Christ—his death paid for their sins, and his perfect life counts as their perfect life.*

3. Where do you see the love of God in the lesson? *God loved us so much that he sacrificed his Son to redeem all believers of all time—from every nation under the sun.*
4. What does God teach you to do in the lesson? *God teaches me to be thankful for his gift of salvation and to realize that only he can judge the hearts of people. He also teaches me to share the gospel with all of those I meet who need to hear the Good News, and he reminds me to be thankful for all the believers who have come before me who shared the gospel faithfully.*

**Lead (share this with a group of your brothers and sisters in Christ)**

1. What would be a good situation in which to share this message? *We can share this message with someone to encourage them in their faith. While we are in a spiritual battle on this earth against sin and the devil, Jesus has already won the battle and secured our salvation for us. He is triumphant.*

**Additional questions (add depth to the lesson)**

1. Who are “the holy Christian Church” and “the communion of saints”? Why are they sometimes called the “invisible church”?

*They are all the believers in Jesus of all time—the whole church of God, Christ’s body.*

*They are sometimes called the invisible church because we cannot read hearts to see who has faith and who does not have faith. Only God knows those who are his. Like we talked about in the “Think” section, there are many visible churches in this world. Unfortunately, not every person who associates with a visible church is a believer, nor do all visible churches teach all of God’s truth faithfully.*

2. Read Ephesians 1:3-8. Where did the holy Christian Church—the invisible body of Christ—have its origin? Let the students discuss. As needed, add the following thoughts.

*Who chose us? The answer may be simple, but the implications are so important that we need to ask the question. God is the actor in our salvation. We are not the deciders.*

*When did God choose us? God chose us before the creation of the world. This fact affirms and highlights the doctrine of salvation by grace alone since we didn’t even exist when God chose us. Our salvation had to be by grace alone. It could not have depended on us.*

*What was God’s motivation for predestinating us? Ephesians 1:4 says that God chose us in love. God’s undeserved love is the motivating force.*

*Does this section tell us that God chose some people to go to hell? No, it does not. The reason people go to heaven is because God chose them. Why do people go to hell? They go to hell because of their own sins and their own rejection of Christ. In Matthew 23:37 Jesus says, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”*

3. Read Galatians 5:9. Why is it important to remember this passage when looking for a congregation to join?

*False doctrine is always dangerous no matter how small of an issue it may seem. False doctrine spreads and affects other doctrines and eventually attacks our confidence in our salvation by our Lord and Savior. It is like poison.*

### Lesson Wrap-Up

1. Who are the “holy Christian Church” and the “Communion of Saints”?
2. Why are they sometimes called the “invisible church”?
3. Where did the “holy Christian Church” have its origin?

*Allow time for answers and various wordings, but discuss how the “holy Christian Church” and the “invisible” church refer to the same group—all believers of all time. This group is called the invisible church because only God can see the heart and the faith of the people who are in it. No, not all visible churches—or churches that you can see—teach God’s truth. It is important for us to test their beliefs to see if they align with what the Bible teaches.*

**Closing** End with a prayer thanking God for the people he has brought together to learn about him and his Word, or with a blessing for the group.

### Extra Information for the Teacher: Topics that May Come Up During the Class

We live in a world surrounded by many different Christian organizations, denominations, and groups. How does God want us to react to them? Let the students discuss. As needed, add the following thoughts.

How does 1 John 4:1 help us start the conversation? 1 John 4:1 says, “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Not all the religious groups, messages, videos, and churches around us are from God. Many false prophets are spreading dangerous teachings that affect our eternity. God wants us to test them.

How does Acts 17:11-12 help us with all the messages around us? The Bereans tested even Paul’s words to see if they aligned with Scripture. We, too, want to compare everything we hear with what God says in the Bible.

What should we do when we find people who teach the Bible faithfully? God wants us to enjoy the fellowship of brothers and sisters who are united in the faith. This was Jesus’ prayer in John 17:20-21 and also the stated desire in 1 John 1:3. We can praise God and work together in love for our Savior.

What does God want us to do when we find people who teach differently than what the Bible says? God wants us to act in love as we first show the people their error (Matthew 18; 2 Timothy 3:16). If they continue to reject instruction, we will want to separate from them to show them the seriousness of their sin and to protect ourselves from false doctrine (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10).

Confessions. Some people claim that doctrinal confessions kill a congregation or a denomination. However, confessions and being a confessional church are very important.

Confessions (such as the small catechism and other doctrinal statements of the church) are helpful because they proclaim the truth so that people who are looking for sound teaching know what they are receiving from a particular church. They also serve as teaching tools and outlines for reviewing doctrine. In addition, they help us compare the teachings of other churches so that we can more easily work on fellowship issues.

Possible extra question: What is the benefit of having written documents stating what you believe collectively?

Understanding the doctrine of election. Students may struggle with the doctrine of predestination/election because it is not logical. “If God chooses some to be saved, doesn’t that automatically mean he has chosen some to be condemned?” they may ask. You will want to remind them that the base of our beliefs does not include our reasoning. Everything needs to be based on the Bible. Another helpful approach to the question is pointing out that the question is really two questions: Why are some saved? and Why are some condemned? You can then direct students to the specific passages for those answers as was mentioned in the main part of the lesson. The doctrine of election is actually a very clear biblical teaching. It’s just difficult for us humans to understand.

Possible extra question: Is the doctrine of election law or gospel? Explain.

