

The Establishment Of The Church

Introduction. So many people misunderstand the beginning of the first century church. Some Christians may have misunderstandings about it too. For this reason, we will examine the church in three stages: prophecy, preparation, and perpetuity.

I. The Church In Prophecy

- A. There are several passages which prophesy of the church in the Old Testament.
 - 1. Isaiah 2:2-3 — This prophecy tells us the “when,” “what,” “who,” and “where” of the coming kingdom.
 - 2. Joel 2:28-32 — This prophecy, quoted in Acts 2:16-21, tells of the signs of their present day and a foreshadowing of the end of the world.
 - 3. Daniel 2:44-45 — This prophecy more specifically details the time of the coming kingdom as occurring during the Roman Empire.
 - 4. Jeremiah 31:31-34 — This prophecy, quoted in Hebrews 8:6-12, explains a new covenant for the new kingdom that would be made with all people.
- B. Other passages in the Old Testament prophesy of the coming kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 89:3-4; 132:11). These passages are typical of several in the Old Testament that predict some great, future change in the way that God deals with His people.
- C. The prophets themselves wondered when they gave the prophecies, but were given no answers. In fact the Old Testament closes without fully revealing what great and wonderful plan God had in mind for His people (1 Peter 1:10-12).

II. The Church In Preparation

- A. There was a time period of a few hundred years between the final writings of the Old Testament and the events recorded in the New Testament.
- B. When the New Testament opens with the history of the births and ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, both of them preached about the kingdom (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17). The kingdom which was spoken of as being as “in the days of these kings” was now “at hand.” There are several more passages which teach that the kingdom was close.
 - 1. Matthew 6:10.
 - 2. Luke 19:11; 22:18.
 - 3. Mark 15:43.
 - 4. Acts 1:6.
- C. Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). We learn two significant facts from this passage.
 - 1. The church had not yet been built. John the Baptist was already dead; therefore the Baptist Church could not have been founded in his days (Matthew 14:10).
 - 2. A simultaneous event with the building of the church was the opening of the kingdom with the “keys” supplied by the Lord (cp. Isaiah 22:22).
- D. The New Testament provides a timeline for the establishment of the church.
 - 1. Mark 9:1 says the kingdom would come with power during the lifetime of some present then.

2. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said that the disciples would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.
 3. In Acts 2:1-4, the Holy Spirit came with power and gave them the power to work miracles, such as speaking in tongues (vv. 6-8).
 4. Therefore, the church or kingdom arrived on Pentecost!
- E. One can furthermore see the predictions of the coming of the kingdom fulfilled in the New Testament.
1. "The days of these kings" (Daniel 2:44) — "The fifteenth year of Tiberius" (Luke 3:1-3).
 2. "The last days" (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1) — "The time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:15).
 3. David's days fulfilled (2 Samuel 7:12-13) — "David ... dead and buried" (Acts 2:29).
 4. "The latter days" (Daniel 2:28; 10:14; Hosea 3:5) — "In the last days spoken" (Hebrews 1:1-2).
 5. "That day" (Isaiah 11:10-11) — "These days" (Acts 3:24).
 6. "The time of the end" (Daniel 12:4, 9) — "The abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15; Luke 21:20).

III. The Church In Perpetuity

- A. All the references to the church and kingdom before Pentecost are anticipatory; after Pentecost they are in the present tense.
1. Acts 2:47; 8:1.
 2. Colossians 1:13.
 3. Revelation 1:9.
- B. Many say the church is not the kingdom.
1. "The kingdom is to be set up after the return of the King in glory" (C. I. Scofield, Scofield Bible, 1909).
 2. "The church is not the kingdom" (Charles Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, 1994).
 3. "Christ will return to earth to establish His promised kingdom" (Warren Wiersbe, New Testament Outlines, 1992).
- C. Although we have alluded to this already in the lesson, a critical point to remember is that the terms "church" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably.
1. Matthew 16:18-19.
 2. Hebrews 12:23, 28.
 3. Further analysis shows the fact that the church and the kingdom are the same.
 - a) The church is "a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36); hence, it is a spiritual kingdom (John 3:3-8; Romans 14:17).
 - b) One is called out of the world and into the church by the gospel (1 Peter 1:22-25; 2:5-9; Ephesians 2:16; 3:6). One is called unto His kingdom by the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).
 - c) The Lord's supper is in the church (1 Corinthians 10-11). The Lord's supper is in the kingdom (Matthew 26:29).

- d) By one Spirit, we are baptized “into one body,” the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). We are “born of water and of the Spirit” to “enter” the kingdom (John 3:3, 5).
 - e) The temple, tabernacle, house, or church is not made with hands (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6; 8:2; 9:11). The kingdom was made “without hands” (Daniel 2:44-45).
 - f) Christ is the savior of the body, the church (Ephesians 5:23). Christ will “deliver up the kingdom unto God” (1 Corinthians 15:24).
 - g) God set Christ to be head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18). God set His king on His holy hill of Zion (Psalm 2:6). Since kings are set over kingdoms, Christ has rule over His kingdom (Luke 1:32-33; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Acts 2:30-31; Hebrews 1:3, 8).
 - h) We are heirs and possess an inheritance in Christ, the church, and the kingdom (Romans 8:17; Ephesians 1:11; 3:6; 5:5).
 - i) The “saved,” “us,” and the “righteous” are “the house (church) of God” (1 Peter 4:17-18; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Timothy 3:15). “Righteousness” is the scepter of Christ’s kingdom (Hebrews 1:8-9; Romans 14:17).
 - j) We are saved by the blood in Christ, the church, and the kingdom (Ephesians 1:7; 2:16; Colossians 1:13-14).
 - k) The “mountain,” government, or house (church) of the Lord go forth “from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2-3; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6). God set His king upon His holy hill of Zion; His government, throne, dominion, and kingdom began “at Jerusalem” (Psalm 2:6; Luke 1:32-33; 24:47-49; Acts 1:6; 2:5, 30-31; 11:15).
 - l) After His death, Christ was made head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:20-23; Philippians 2:9-11). “In thy kingdom” equals “into thy glory” (Matthew 20:21; Mark 10:37). Christ entered into His glory after His death (Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:11).
 - m) We are members of Christ, the church, and the kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:15; Ephesians 5:30, 32; Matthew 11:11; Revelation 1:9).
- D. We can see the steps to salvation by observing what men and women in the first century did to be saved.
1. The people at Pentecost (Acts 2:38, 41).
 2. The Samaritans (Acts 8:12).
 3. The eunuch (Acts 8:36-38).
 4. Saul (Acts 9:17-18).
 5. Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48).
 6. Lydia (Acts 16:14-15).
 7. The jailer (Acts 16:31-33).
 8. The Corinthians (Acts 18:8).
 9. The Ephesians (Acts 19:4-5).
- E. Many say that baptism is not essential.
1. “Baptism is not essential to salvation” (Baptist Manual, 1890).
 2. “We are not saved by baptism” (Billy Graham, My Answer, 1958).
 3. “Baptism does not wash away sins” (Charles Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, 1994).
 4. “It is not a washing away of one’s sins” (J.W., Truth That Leads To Life, 1968).

- F. We can see the essentiality of baptism by observing what you cannot do without baptism.
1. Obey Christ's commands (Matthew 28:19).
 2. Be saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21).
 3. Enter the kingdom (John 3:3, 5).
 4. Have remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
 5. Wash away sins (Acts 22:16).
 6. Walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).
 7. Be in the one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).
 8. Put on Christ (Galatians 3:27).
- G. A final illustration will help us to see that identifying the first century church is not a difficult or illusive task.
1. I absolutely know what kind of vehicle I own. If I were to park at Walmart and walk into the parking lot to see a different car, I would not make a mistake and get in the wrong car.
 2. They same can be said of the Lord's church if someone is willing to study it closely. It has a peculiar founder, name, organization, mission, etc. It is not that difficult for an open-minded person to come to the correct conclusion.

Conclusion. The first century church was started in Acts 2. The church and the kingdom are the same, contrary to the opinion of many in the religious world. The scriptures reveal what makes one a member of this church or kingdom. Are you saved? Have you been added to the Lord's church? If not, will you come now?