

Back to the Basics

The Church Built by Jesus

Memory Verse:
Matthew 16:18-19

The Church

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*” The word church is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia* which means “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly.” (Thayer) To shorten the definition, you could say that *ekklesia* (church) means those who are called out. From this definition, we understand that Jesus was saying that He would build His group of those who are called out or His church.

In Acts 2:47 we see a reference to this church which Jesus promised to build. “. . . *And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*” (Acts 2:47) Applying the above definition of *ekklesia* (church) to this verse, we see that the Lord added to the group of those who had been called out (the church). The Lord added those who were saved to the church. (We will address this point later in our study.)

What is the church? The church is a group composed of those who have been called out of sin and the darkness of the world. The one church found in the New Testament is composed of those who have been called out by Jesus Christ. (cf. Matthew 11:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:14)

The Establishment of the Lord’s Church

To better understand the church of Christ, it is essential that we begin with some Old Testament prophecies which foretold the coming of the church. Let us begin with the prophet Joel. Around the time period of 835 B.C., the prophet Joel wrote a prophecy that pointed to events surrounding the establishment of the church. (Joel 2:28-32) Consider the following excerpts:

- q “. . . *pour out My Spirit on all flesh . . .*” (v. 28)
- q “. . . *Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.*” (v. 28)
- q “*The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.*” (v. 31)
- q “. . . *whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” (v. 32)
- q “. . . *in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance . . .*” (v. 32)

A couple hundred years later, somewhere around 605 B.C. to 536 B.C., the prophet Daniel put forth a prophecy which again foretold events leading up to the establishment the church. (Daniel 2:31-45) The prophecy came in the form of an interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream foretold the coming of four great empires or kingdoms followed by the greatest kingdom, the church.

During the same time period as Daniel, B.C. 627 - B.C. 580, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied about the establishment of a New Covenant. (Jeremiah 31:31-34) Take notice of parts of the prophecy: “. . . *I will make a*

new covenant . . .” (vs 31), “. . . *I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*” (vs 33), and “*No more shall every man teach his neighbor, saying, . . . 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, . . .*” (vs 34)

Not only did the prophets prophecy about the coming of the church, but we also see that Jesus promised to establish His kingdom, to build His church. Consider the following passages which contain promises about a coming kingdom, the church.

In Matthew 6:10, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “*Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*” In another reference to the coming kingdom, Jesus said, “*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*” (Matthew 24:14) Mark 9 records Jesus promising that some of the hearers present with Him would not die until they saw the kingdom of God present with power. (Mark 9:1)

In addition to the Old Testament prophecies, Jesus, on several occasions, promised to build His church. “*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*” (Matthew 16:18-19) Take notice that once the church was built, the apostles would be given the “keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

After His death and resurrection, just before ascending into Heaven, Jesus promised His apostles, “. . . *but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. . . But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” (Acts 1:4-8)

As prophesied and as promised, Jesus established His church. Acts 2 contains the record of the establishment of the church on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the death of Jesus. In verses 1-4, we see that the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit as was promised by Jesus and as was prophesied by Joel. In verses 5-13, we find the apostles being given the ability to speak in tongues, that is the ability to speak in a foreign language of which they were unlearned. This gift

<u>Nebuchadnezzar's Dream</u>		
Head of Gold -----	Babylonia -----	626 B.C.
Chest & Arms of Silver -----	Medo-Persia -	539 B.C.
Belly & Thighs of Bronze -----	Greece -----	330 B.C.
Legs of Iron -----	Rome -----	63 B.C.
Feet of Clay -----	Rome -----	63 B.C.
Great Stone -----	Church -----	30 A.D.

of speaking in tongues provided proof that the apostles' teachings came from God. (See Hebrews 2:1-4.)

Beginning in verse 14, we have the "first gospel sermon" as preached by Peter. In verses 14-21, Peter showed how the prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled. (See page 35 for excerpts from Joel's prophecy.) In verses 22-36, Peter preached to the people Jesus and Him crucified, the resurrection of Jesus, as well as the exaltation of Jesus. Peter also showed the people their sin. Then, in verses 37-39, based on their question of "what shall we do," Peter told the people what to do to receive the remission of their sins.

Peter said, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" (Acts 2:38)

"3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"

(Hebrews 2:3-4)

On that day, 3000 people responded to Peter's instructions to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. Once they obeyed, the people were saved and the Lord added them to the church. (vs 40-41, 47) This was the beginning of the Lord's church.

The Church Belongs to Christ

The church belongs to Jesus because He paid the price for the church. Paul wrote to the elders in Ephesus, "*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*" (Acts 20:28) Take notice again of that last phrase, "*to shepherd the church of God which He (Jesus, jmd) purchased with His own blood.*" When Jesus died on the cruel cross, He made the ultimate sacrifice so that man could be set free from his bondage to sin. For our benefit, the price that Jesus had to pay was His life. His blood had to be shed.

The shedding of Jesus' blood wrought great benefits for the follower of God. In Hebrews 9:11-17, the writer explains the benefits of the shedding of Jesus' blood. Take notice of the following excerpts from the text:

- q " *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come . . .*" (v. 11)
- q " . . . *but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption . . .*" (v. 12)
- q " *how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*" (v. 14)
- q " *And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, . . . that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*" (v. 15)

Because Jesus shed His blood, several great things became reality: 1) Jesus became our High Priest, 2) He established a new covenant, 3) Our consciences have been cleansed from dead words,

and 4) We have become God’s own people. (In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter referred to Christians as God’s “own special people” (“a peculiar people” - KJV).)

Through the shedding of His blood, Jesus paid the price for His people, the church. This death made possible man’s redemption. The apostle Paul wrote, “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace . . .*” (Ephesians 1:7)

The Church is the Body of Christ

Paul wrote in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, “*And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*” (Ephesians 1:22,23) According to the apostle Paul, Christ is the head over all things to the church, His body. This simply means that the church (those called out of sin) is the body of Christ and that Christ is the head of the church (body). This concept becomes even more clear when we consider the words of Paul in Galatians 3:27, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” Here we plainly see that when a person is baptized, he is baptized into Christ, baptized into His body. Paul wrote, “*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . .*” (1 Corinthians 12:13) This one body was referring to the body of Christ, the church.

Since the church belongs to Christ and it is the body of Christ, only Christ can add people to His church. Luke wrote, “*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*” (Acts 2:47) When a person believes in Jesus Christ, repents of his past sinful life, confesses his belief, and is baptized into Jesus Christ, the Lord will add that person to the church, the body of Christ.

Another distinctive quality of the church is that it bears the name of Christ in different forms. (See chart, *Bible References*, to the left.)

In all the references, we see phrases or statements of ownership. For instance, consider as an example Romans 16:16 where Paul used the phrase “churches of Christ.” Paul was not using “churches of Christ” as a title, but instead, a simple statement of ownership. The church of Christ is the church that belongs to or was built by Christ. All the descriptions refer to the same church - the church that Jesus Christ built. (Matthew 16:18) (In our religious culture, it is not uncommon for a religious group to use man made names. See *partial list of Man’s Names to the left*. A study of the New Testament will reveal an absence of any man made names.)

<u>Bible References</u>	<u>Man’s Names</u>
churches of Christ (Romans 16:16)	Adventist
churches of God (1 Cor. 11:16; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4)	Baptist
church of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 3:5)	Catholic
church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23)	Community Church
church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15)	Episcopal
	Latter Day Saints
	Lutheran
	Methodist
	Pentecostal
	Presbyterian
	Unitarian

The Warning

Should we beware of churches which do not bear the characteristics of Christ's church? The answer is a resounding, "Yes." Here are the reasons why. First, the apostle Paul taught that there is only one body. (Ephesians 4:4) Since the body of Christ is the church, we must conclude that there is only one church that Christ built. Beware of anyone who teaches that God established a multitude of churches, all with different beliefs. Such a claim only attempts to justify the existence of contradicting religious beliefs. This justification attempts only to ease the consciences of those involved in the division.

Secondly, the church of Christ was founded upon the teachings of Christ and His apostles. Paul wrote, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, . . ." (Ephesians 2:19,20) Beware of any church that does not teach and practice all that Jesus and His apostles taught. Any such church not founded upon the teachings of Christ and His apostles is not the church that Christ built. The apostle Paul warned that all who would teach something different than what was taught by Christ and His apostles would be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9) Paul wrote, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8-9, NKJV) Paul's warning is in harmony with Jesus' teachings. Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (Matthew 15:13, KJV) This warning applies to any and all who attempt to establish a religious belief not already built by Jesus Christ. Since there was only one church built by Jesus Christ, then there can only be one true church today.

To help increase your ability to differentiate the difference between the true church of Christ and the churches of men, study carefully the distinctive qualities of Christ's church. The chart, *Distinctive Qualities of Christ's Church*, displayed to the right, will help aid you in your studies. If you expect to convert people to Jesus Christ and His body (the church), then you must be prepared to explain the differences between man's churches and the church that Jesus built.

Distinctive Qualities of Christ's Church

- ü Prophesied of by Joel. (Joel 2:28-32)
- ü Prophesied of by Daniel. (Daniel 2:31-45)
- ü Prophesied of by Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- ü Promised by Jesus. (Matthew 6:10; 24:14; Mark 9:1)
- ü Builder would be Jesus. (Matthew 16:18)
- ü Beginning of seen in Acts 2, approx. 30 A.D. (Acts 2)
- ü Belongs only to Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:28)
- ü It is the body of Christ. (Ephesians 1:22,23)
- ü Christ is it's only head. (Ephesians 1:22,23)
- ü People are added to by the Lord. (Acts 2:47)
- ü Bears no man-made or man-given names.
- ü The only church built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ being its chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19-20)

Ten Questions

1. What is the meaning of the Greek word “ekklesia”? _____

2. During the first century, who added people to the church? _____
3. List the three Old Testament prophets referred to in this lesson. _____

4. Which prophet wrote, “. . . pour out My Spirit on all flesh . . .”? _____
5. In Matthew 6:10, what did Jesus teach His disciples to pray that pertained to the establishing of the church. _____

6. Give the passage that records Jesus saying, “. . . But you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now . . .” _____
7. Give one main reason why the church belongs to Christ. _____

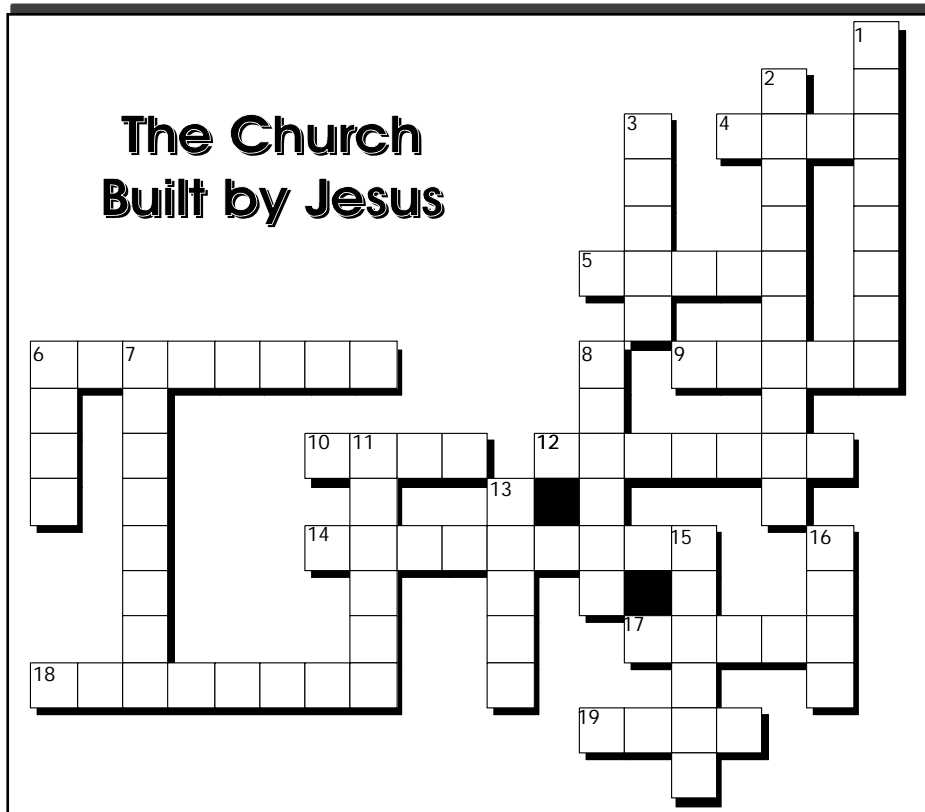
8. Who wrote, “In Him we have redemption through His blood”? _____
9. What will happen to the man who preaches something different than the gospel taught by Christ and His apostles? _____
10. Upon what is the church built? _____

True or False

1. T or F : Jesus told Paul, “And I also say to you that you are Paul, and on this rock I will build my church, . . .”
2. T or F : King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that prophesied the coming of the church.
3. T or F : Jeremiah wrote, “. . . I will make a new covenant . . .”
4. T or F : On the day of Pentecost, 5000 people responded to Peter’s instructions to repent and be baptized.
5. T or F : Abraham is the “mediator of the new covenant, by means of death.”
6. T or F : New people are added to the Lord’s church by a majority vote.
7. T or F : The “church of the firstborn” is another scriptural reference to the Lord’s church.
8. T or F : Jesus is the chief cornerstone.
9. T or F : Jesus built more than one church.
10. T or F : “Christian church” is another scriptural reference to the Lord’s church.

A Little Fun

(Use the lesson text to answer these questions.)



Across

4. "... And the _____ added to the church daily those who were being saved."
5. Jesus promised to _____ His church.
6. "For by one Spirit we are all _____ into one body . . ."
9. To whom did Jesus say, ". . . and on this rock I will build My church, . . ."
10. This book records the beginning of the Lord's church.
12. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Your _____ come."
14. ". . . to shepherd the church of God which He _____ with His own blood."
17. "But even if we, or an _____ from heaven, preach any other gospel to you . . . , let him be accursed."
18. This man wrote, ". . . I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; . . ."
19. This man wrote, ". . . whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Down

1. "And for this reason He is the _____ of the new covenant . . ."
2. The church was "built on the _____ of the apostles and prophets, . . ."
3. Who said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up"?
6. The church is the _____ of Christ.
7. 1 Peter 2:9 reads, ". . . a _____ people . . ." in the King James Version.
8. ". . . But Christ came as High _____ of the good things to come . . ."
11. Jesus promised to build His _____.
13. _____ thousand people were saved on the day of Pentecost.
15. This man interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.
16. These gates would not prevail against the church.

Passages in this Lesson

Jeremiah 31:31-34	pg 36,39	1 Corinthians 11:16	pg 38
Daniel 2:31-45	pg 36,39	1 Corinthians 11:22	pg 38
Joel 2:28-32	pg 35,39	1 Corinthians 12:13	pg 38
Matthew 6:10	pg 36,39	1 Corinthians 15:9	pg 38
Matthew 11:28	pg 35	2 Corinthians 1:1	pg 38
Matthew 15:13	pg 39	Galatians 1:6-9	pg 39
Matthew 16:18-19	pg 35,36,38,39	Galatians 1:13	pg 38
Matthew 24:14	pg 36,39	Galatians 3:27	pg 38
Mark 9:1.....	pg 36,39	Ephesians 1:7	pg 37
Acts 1:4-8	pg 36	Ephesians 1:22,23	pg 38,39
Acts 2	pg 39	Ephesians 2:19,20	pg 39
Acts 2:1-4	pg 36	Ephesians 4:4	pg 38
Acts 2:5-13	pg 36	1 Thessalonians 2:14	pg 38
Acts 2:14-21.....	pg 37	2 Thessalonians 1:4	pg 38
Acts 2:22-36	pg 37	2 Thessalonians 2:14	pg 35
Acts 2:37-39	pg 37	1 Timothy 3:5	pg 38
Acts 2:38	pg 37	1 Timothy 3:15	pg 38
Acts 2:47	pg 35,38,39	Hebrews 2:1-4	pg 37
Acts 20:28	pg 37,38,39	Hebrews 9:11-17	pg 37
Romans 16:16	pg 38	Hebrews 12:23-38	pg 38
1 Corinthians 1:2	pg 38	1 Peter 2:9	pg 37
1 Corinthians 10:32	pg 38		