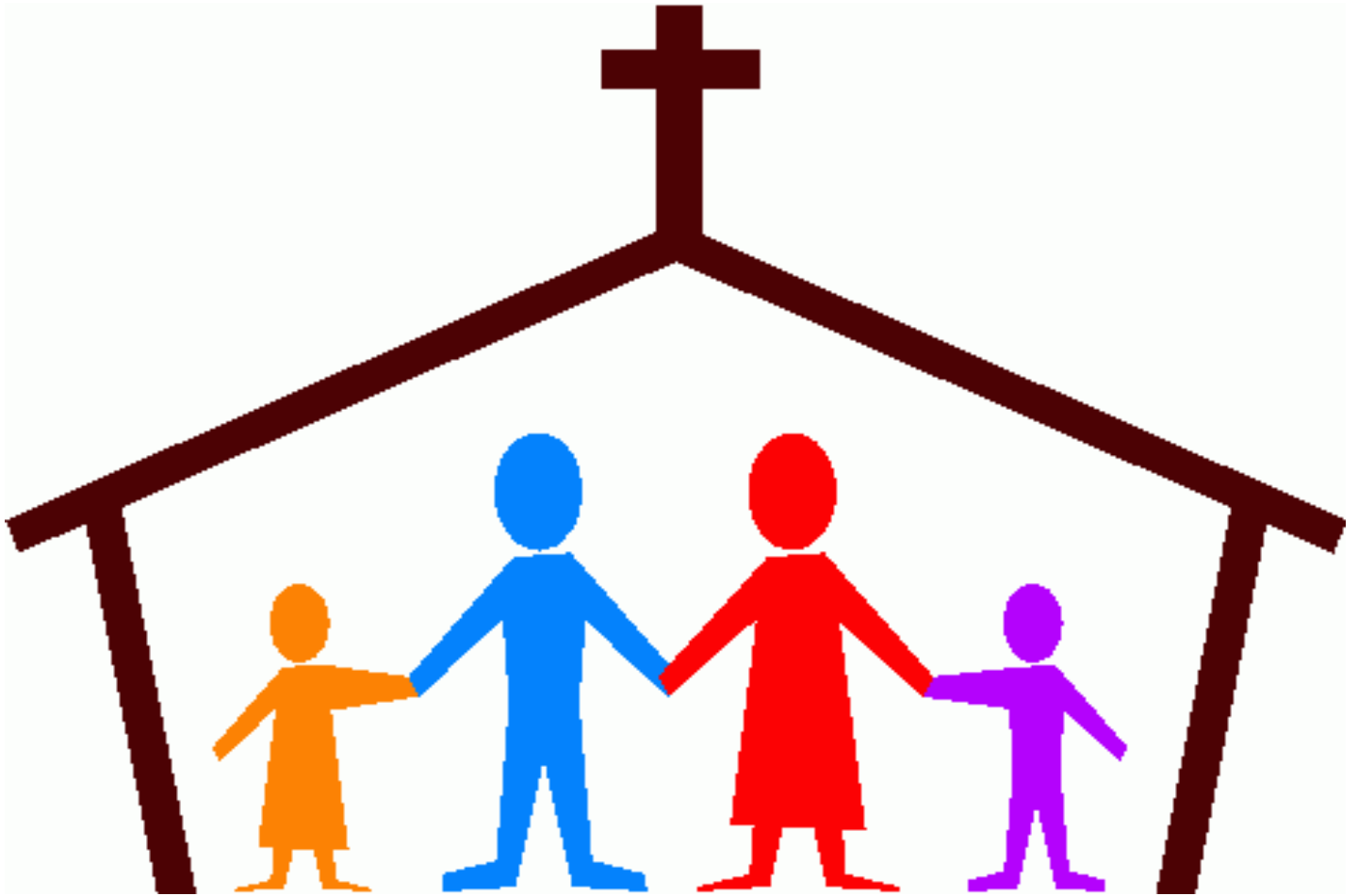


The Church Of Christ

Lesson 4:

The Establishment Of The Church



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

The Church Of Christ
Lesson 4: The Establishment Of The Church

Learn about some prophecies made concerning the church and the day on which the church was established

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW63

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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The Church Of Christ

Lesson 4: The Establishment Of The Church

There are thousands of different churches and religious organizations throughout this world – with thousands of different points and times of origin. Each one of these religious organizations which are not truly Christ’s church began at a different place and a different time than Jesus’s church – and they all had different founders!

If we truly desire to learn about and be part of Christ’s one true church, shouldn’t we be interested to discover what the Bible teaches about the establishment of His church? There were both Old and New Testament prophecies made concerning the establishment of the church of Christ. Now, all of these prophecies have been fulfilled – but, they have *only* been fulfilled by the one true church Jesus Christ established!

If a religious organization began in any other place besides the place Jesus’ church began, it cannot be Christ’s church. If a religious organization began at any other time besides the time Jesus’ church began, it cannot be Christ’s church. If a religious

organization began in any other way besides the way Jesus’ church began, it cannot be Christ’s church.

Now, as we prepare to study this lesson, understand that we are talking about Jesus’ church in its “universal” sense. As we established in lesson 1, there is only one true church that belongs to Jesus Christ in this “universal” sense. This is how Jesus uses the word “church” in Matthew 16:18 when He says, “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.” Local churches of Christ, as we briefly discussed in lesson 1, are composed of Christians in local geographic areas. These local churches begin at various points in time through the influence of many different individuals. These are fully authorized by God to exist. However, the focus of this study is on Jesus’ one true church in the “universal” sense (the totality of the saved). This study focuses on the beginning of His kingdom.

Therefore, the purpose of this lesson is to gain a greater understanding about how the establishment of the church of Christ in Acts 2 was the fulfillment of numerous prophecies that were made prior – and to understand that the true church must be able to trace its origin back to this significant point in time.

Old Testament Prophecies

The church of Christ (the kingdom of God) was not established during the Old Testament period. However, it was prophesied in those days. These prophecies provide useful information as we strive to understand the origin of the Lord’s church!

Isaiah 2:2-4

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord’s house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from

Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.”

In this text, the “mountain of the Lord’s house” is symbolic of God’s governance over His people (as Mount Zion near Jerusalem became symbolic of Jerusalem and the rule of God over His people). Specifically, the reference in this passage is the kingdom God would establish and call people of all nations to be part of.

Notice the specific prophecies that are contained within this reading. (1) People of all nations would be given the opportunity to be part of this kingdom. (2) God would give His law that would govern His people from Jerusalem (i.e. it would first be proclaimed in Jerusalem). (3) Those who were part of this kingdom would “beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore” – indicating that these citizens (though members of various nations) would be at peace with one another and would not use physical warfare to advance the cause of this kingdom. (4) This kingdom would “come to pass in the latter days.”

Daniel 2:31-45

“You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

“This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are

a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all — you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold — the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

In this text, Daniel is providing the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) with the interpretation of his dream. Read all of Daniel chapter 2 to get the full context of this passage. The chapter begins by identifying that Nebuchadnezzar was greatly troubled by his dreams – so much that he was unable to sleep. Therefore, the king sought diligently for someone who would be able to reveal the proper interpretation of it. Daniel was the one who was willing and able to provide the accurate interpretation of the dream. Specifically, the dream was concerning a statue, each part of the statue representing four succeeding earthly kingdoms. The statue had a head of God, representing the Babylonian kingdom. It had a chest and arms of silver, representing the Medo-Persian kingdom. It

had a belly and thighs of bronze, representing the Grecian kingdom. And, it had legs of iron and feet partly of iron and partly of clay, representing the Roman kingdom. Then, in the days of this kingdom (the Roman kingdom), a stone was cut out of the mountain and broke the great statue in pieces – as it would be an everlasting kingdom and would be greater than all of these earthly kingdoms combined! This kingdom, Daniel said, is the kingdom God would establish!

Notice the specific prophecies made in this passage concerning God’s kingdom (the church). (1) God would establish a kingdom. (2) God’s kingdom would be an everlasting kingdom. (3) God’s kingdom would be established during the kingdom represented by the legs of iron and feet partly of iron and partly of clay (the Roman kingdom). (4) This kingdom would begin small and would grow to be great.

Joel 2:28-32

“And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the Lord has said, Among the remnant whom the Lord calls.”

This text records both great hope and great destruction. As is frequently true regarding prophecies in Scripture, the language is symbolic and apocalyptic – not language to be interpreted literally. The passage speaks of a time of judgment upon the enemies of God and a time of deliverance for those who will submit to God’s rule and call upon Him. In reference to God’s kingdom/church, you should notice that this is the prophecy Peter repeated in Acts 2:17-21 (on the Day of Pentecost), when he said that the events transpiring on that day were the fulfillment

of Joel’s prophecy (written here)! Certainly, this prophecy points to the time at which God’s people could call upon Him for salvation through Jesus Christ and be part of His kingdom – and those who rejected Him would experience the judgment and destruction depicted in this prophecy.

Notice the specific prophecies made in this passage concerning God’s kingdom (the church). (1) God’s Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. (2) The one who would call upon the name of the Lord would be saved from the destruction. (3) This would “come to pass afterward” (or, “in the last days” – Acts 2:17).

Micah 4:1-8

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make them afraid; For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. For all people walk each in the name of his god, But we will walk in the name of the Lord our God Forever and ever.

“‘In that day,’ says the Lord, ‘I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast And those whom I have afflicted; I will make the lame a remnant, And the outcast a strong nation; So the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on, even forever. And you, O tower of the flock, The stronghold of the daughter of Zion, To you shall it come, Even the former dominion shall come, The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.’”

Observe the similarity in the language of this text and the prophecy made by Isaiah in Isaiah 2:2-4. Both passages identify the “mountain of the Lord’s house” that would be established. Again, Micah is

pointing to the future kingdom of God reigning over His people and some characteristics of this kingdom.

Notice the specific prophecies made about God's kingdom in this text. (1) This kingdom would be established in the "latter days" (i.e. last days). (2) This kingdom would be superior to all other kingdoms. (3) People of all nations would be given the opportunity to be part of this kingdom. (4) It would be established in Zion (Jerusalem). (5) The law of God for His people would go forth from Jerusalem (i.e. it would be first proclaimed in Jerusalem and would then spread throughout the world). (6) The kingdom would be peaceful among itself and would not advance its cause through physical warfare.

Summary

The prophecies about the Messiah who would come and offer the forgiveness of sins was the main theme of the Old Testament story. Throughout the Old Testament, God provides prophecies about the Messiah that would serve to identify Jesus Christ whenever He would come to the earth. In close connection with the coming of the Messiah also were these prophecies concerning God's kingdom that would be established and His new covenant (the gospel). We have specifically noticed four Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom God would establish. Now, we will turn our attention to the New Testament and continue to watch these things unfold. Keep all of these prophecies in your mind and watch their fulfillment!

The Coming Of The Kingdom

When the period of the Old Testament ends and the New Testament begins, the Bible story entirely focuses on the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning God's plan of redemption through the Messiah. "Christ is coming" had been the theme of the Old Testament. Now, as the New Testament describes the birth of Jesus Christ, the Bible story shifts to the message of "Christ is here."

As the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) record the events concerning the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, we continue to notice important references to the coming of Christ's kingdom. This message was central to the ministries of John (the Baptist) and Jesus Christ (the Messiah).

So, at this point in our study, let's focus on some of the teaching about the coming of the kingdom during the ministries of John (the Baptist) and Jesus – and continue to observe prophecies that were made concerning the kingdom of God (even in the New Testament).

The kingdom of Heaven is "at hand"

During the ministry of John, the Baptist, he taught that the kingdom of Heaven was "at hand." Matthew 3:1-2 records: "In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'"

Now, the phrase, "at hand" was used to indicate that something was near/close. Therefore, the NIV translates John's statement as: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." So, you should observe a few things from this passage. (1) The kingdom had not yet been established as of when John made this statement. (2) The kingdom was a heavenly kingdom (a spiritual kingdom), not an earthly kingdom. (3) The time for the kingdom to be established had come near to them (it was almost here).

Then, you need to pause to consider when it was that John made the statement concerning the kingdom of Heaven being "near." Luke 3:1-2 (a parallel passage to the one in Matthew 3) says, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." While this passage identifies some of the regional rulers at this time, I want you to specifically notice the reference to "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar." Tiberius Caesar became the emperor of Rome in

A.D. 14 and reigned until his death in A.D. 39. Therefore, the time of John's proclamation for the nearness of God's kingdom was during the reign of the Roman Empire (think back to the Old Testament prophecy in Daniel 2)!

I will build My church

John, the Baptist, was not the only one to make reference to the coming of this heavenly kingdom. This was also a major theme of Jesus' earthly ministry! Notice, specifically, Jesus' statement to Peter in Matthew 16:18-19: "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."

Again, notice some important conclusions from this passage concerning the church. (1) The terms "church" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably in this passage. (2) The kingdom/church had not yet been established. (3) Jesus would be the builder of the church – and it would be His church. (4) There would only be one church/kingdom that would be established by God. (5) It would be established during the lifetime of the apostles – as it is said that the apostle Peter would have an influential role in the kingdom/church (as the other apostles also would).

This is just one instance in which Jesus taught concerning the church/kingdom He would establish. There were actually many times throughout Jesus' earthly ministry in which He taught concerning the kingdom and the nature of kingdom citizens. For instance, in Matthew 6:10, as Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray, He said, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven." Notice that during this time in Jesus' ministry, the kingdom had not yet been established – as His disciples prayed for the kingdom to come.

In many other places, Jesus taught parables concerning His kingdom. Matthew 13 is just one specific chapter that contains several parables about His kingdom. Through these parables, Jesus was attempting to help those who heard understand the

true nature of the kingdom – and what would be involved in kingdom citizenship. Read through each one of these parables and learn from Jesus' teaching about His kingdom.

Till they see the kingdom of God

The passages I have just listed are only a sample of Jesus' teaching about His coming kingdom. As you read the gospel records of Jesus' teaching, you should be careful to observe all of the references Jesus makes to His kingdom. This is His church He promised to establish.

However, I want you to take particular note of one promise that Jesus made concerning the establishment of His kingdom in Luke 9:27. After Jesus had just fed the 5,000 men (plus women and children) with the five loaves and two fish, He taught His disciples a great message about the establishment of His church, His coming death, and about dedication in following Him. Then, Jesus said, "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God" (compare with Matthew 16:28).

As you observe the words of Jesus in this text, consider a few facts about Jesus' kingdom. (1) Jesus is making a promise to His disciples about the kingdom/church. (2) This promise includes a specific time reference. (3) Jesus' kingdom had not already been established at this point. (4) Jesus' kingdom would be established within the lifetime of some who were present on that occasion!

Tarry in Jerusalem

After Jesus had been put to death by crucifixion, buried, and rose from the dead, Jesus gave some final instructions to His apostles prior to His resurrection. As you consider these instructions, you should observe that they have direct connections to the establishment of Christ's church (as we will see in Acts 2).

First, please observe that both the books of Luke and Acts were written by Luke to a man by the name of Theophilus (see Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1). The book of Luke focuses on the life of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts is a continuation of the book of Luke, picking up with the ascension of Jesus Christ

The Church Of Christ Is Established

and describes the establishment and growth of Christ's church. In fact, there is a small portion of the two books that overlap – concerning these final instructions of Jesus to His apostles and Jesus' ascension into Heaven.

Now, consider the instructions of Jesus in Luke 24:44-49: "Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.'"

Jesus' apostles were waiting for the promise of the Father (the coming of the Holy Spirit), as Jesus had promised them in John 14-16. He explained that His suffering, death, and resurrection were all necessary to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures – and that they would be witnesses of these things and would preach the gospel of repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Therefore, Jesus told His apostles that they needed to wait/tarry in the city of Jerusalem for this promise to be fulfilled ("until you are endued with power from on high").

As Luke continues this record in Acts chapters 1 and 2, and we learn about the events that unfold in these two chapters, it is significant to observe that the apostles are in Jerusalem. After Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven from the Mount of Olives, Acts 1:12 says that "they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey." This, then, provides the context for the events that begin to transpire through Acts 2! The disciples are being obedient to Jesus Christ and waiting in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father.

With the apostles of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, waiting for the promise of the Father, we pick up the record midway through Acts chapter 1. The eleven apostles are in an upper room (recall that Judas Iscariot had killed himself earlier). There are a total of about 120 disciples present. At this time, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and apostles and speaks concerning the need to select a replacement for Judas. The Lord guides them to select a man by the name of Matthias. "And he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26).

Acts 2

With this context, consider what Luke records in Acts 2:1-4: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

The twelve apostles have the Holy Spirit come upon them and they are able to speak in tongues so that the people present in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost would be able to hear and understand the message in their own native languages. As the Holy Spirit is directing them to speak God's message and the people hear the sound, the people are confused and amazed concerning the events that are transpiring. Some are honestly questioning, "Whatever could this mean?" (Acts 2:12). Others are mocking, saying, "They are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13).

Then, Acts 2:14-21 records the following: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But

this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.”” This, Peter said, was the fulfillment of the prophecy made by Joel (which we noticed earlier in this lesson)!

Peter then preaches Jesus Christ to the people. He says that Jesus was a man accredited to them by God through the miracles, wonders, and signs God had done through Jesus in the midst of the Jews. However, Jesus (according to the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God) was taken by the lawless hands of the Jews and was put to death. However, God raised Him up from the dead because it was not possible for Jesus to be held by death! David had even prophesied concerning this when He said, “For you will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will you allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:27; compare with Psalm 16:10). Peter states that David could not have been talking about himself – because he is both dead and buried, and his tomb was with them even that day! Instead, Peter says that David was speaking about Jesus Christ. He said, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:32).

He continues in Acts 2:33-36: “Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” So, as the “first gospel sermon” concludes, Peter calls upon the

Jewish audience to accept the truth about Jesus Christ!

This call to accept the truth about Christ and the truth about the Jews being responsible for Jesus’ murder left those with sincere hearts with the question, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). To this question, Peter responded: “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. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39). There was hope for them! There was a way they could be forgiven of their sins (through Jesus Christ by repenting and being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins)! Therefore, Peter continued to encourage and warn them all to save themselves from the perverse/corrupt generation that had crucified the Messiah (Acts 2:40)!

Then, the Scriptures record: “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). Verse 47 adds, “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Jesus’ kingdom/church had now been established – and those who were being saved were being added to it by the Lord! From this point forward, the church and the kingdom are seen as being in existence! For instance, Colossians 1:13 says, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

Christ’s church fulfilled all of the prophecies!

Take a few moments to think back over the prophecies that had been made concerning Jesus’ church/kingdom. Every one of these prophecies found its fulfillment in the church (the spiritual kingdom) that was established in Acts chapter 2! This clearly marks the beginning point for Jesus’ one true church!

(1) Established by Jesus Christ. Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). He died to purchase it (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19). He is the One who was preached (i.e. Acts 2; Acts 8:5,

35). He is the One who was recognized as its Head (Colossians 1:18).

(2) During the lifetime of those in Luke 9:27. Clearly this was so. The events of Acts 2 were not very far removed from the time Jesus spoke in Luke 9:27. For instance, Jesus' apostles are still living in Acts 2 (with the exception of Judas). Also notice that the kingdom was said to be in existence by the time Colossians 1:13 was written. Therefore, we are not still waiting for the coming of the kingdom!

(3) During the days of the Romans. We have already established that it was during the days of the Roman kingdom whenever the kingdom of God was "at hand" (Matthew 3:1-2; Luke 3:1-2). In Acts 2, it is still during the days of the Roman empire/kingdom – in fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel 2.

(4) Beginning in Jerusalem. The church was prophesied to begin in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4). Remember that Christ had instructed His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49). Whenever all of the events of Acts 2 took place, the apostles were in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4, 12).

(5) The last days. The church was prophesied to begin during the last days (i.e. Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-5). Peter, quoting from Joel, said that these things were taking place in the last days (Acts 2:16-17). According to other passages of Scripture, we can understand that the period of time from Acts 2 through present day are the "last days" (i.e. 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Hebrews 1:1-3). These are the "last days" in the sense of this being the last dispensation (i.e. we are not awaiting any other law from God). The only thing we are waiting for is the coming of Jesus Christ!

(6) All nations. All nations were prophesied to flow into the kingdom/church (Isaiah 2:2). These things began on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 – when Jews gained access to the kingdom of God. It would not be long after this time before the gospel was proclaimed to the Gentiles and they would also be accepted into the kingdom of God (Acts 10-11). Now, all are able to be part of the church/kingdom – and all are equal (see Colossians 3:11; Galatians 3:26-29).

(7) God's Spirit poured out. Peter identifies Joel's prophecy concerning this in Acts 2:17-18. The apostles received the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. Later, the household of Cornelius would receive this same baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47; Acts 11:15-17). Furthermore, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit would be given through the laying on of the apostles hands (Acts 8:17-18). Therefore, individuals would have gifts of prophesy, tongue-speaking, etc.

(8) Those who called on the name of the Lord were being saved. Such is Joel's prophecy (as quoted by Peter in Acts 2:21). The calling on the name of the Lord was preached during this time after the church was established (as in Romans 10:13). It was when individuals were obedient to the gospel's plan of salvation that they were calling on the name of the Lord (i.e. Acts 22:16). Therefore, we can conclude that calling on the name of the Lord involves obeying all of the gospel's plan of salvation: Hear God's word, believe, repent of your sins, confess Christ, be baptized – then, remain faithful. Individuals were first obedient to this plan of salvation in Acts 2 (i.e. verse 38, 41, 47).

(9) Began small and grew. Such is the picture presented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2). Jesus also taught this same point in the parable of the mustard seed (Luke 13:18-19). Indeed, there were initially only about 3,000 individuals who were part of the kingdom (Acts 2:41). However, the gospel has since been preached throughout the world and many have been added to the kingdom!

(10) Everlasting. Christ's kingdom was to be an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 2:44). Christ's kingdom was established in Acts 2 – and continues to stand today! Although it has faced numerous persecutions and has faced many physical obstacles, the kingdom of God continues to exist! Furthermore, even when this world has been destroyed and all the earthly nations and kingdoms are no more, God's kingdom will continue to stand (1 Corinthians 15:24)!

(11) Peaceful. This kingdom was not going to be about engaging in wars against earthly kingdoms (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3-4). Indeed, Christ's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Christ's kingdom

would truly be a peaceful kingdom (Matthew 5:9). As the gospel has been proclaimed, Christians are never (rightfully) taught to engage in physical wars against other kingdoms – for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven! Rather, Christians are taught to wage a spiritual war – proclaiming the gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world!

Conclusion

Every single prophecy made in the Old Testament Scriptures and the promises made in the New Testament concerning Jesus' church/kingdom finds its fulfillment in the church established in Acts 2! God did not fail in His attempt to establish His kingdom (as some people suggest today). His kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, but is a spiritual kingdom! Before Jesus' death, Jesus told the Roman governor Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36)!

Today, you can be a part of Christ's church/kingdom – no matter what your nationality is, your social status is, your economic status is, your educational level is, etc.! If you will accept Jesus Christ by faith and obey His commandments (calling on the name of the Lord), the Lord will add you to His church – just as He added about 3,000 to His church on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2!

We can now be part of His kingdom. We do not need to pray for its coming any longer (as Jesus had taught His disciples in Matthew 6:10). Acts 2 clearly marks the beginning point of Jesus' church – and Colossians 1:13 clearly identifies His kingdom as being in existence! This is because they are one in the same.

Therefore, as you seek to learn about and be part of Christ's one true church, it is important for you to recognize these fundamental truths about the establishment of Christ's church. The churches of men do not fulfill these prophecies! Only the church of Christ is the fulfillment of these prophecies! Any other place a church began is the wrong place. Any

other time a church began is the wrong time. Any other founder a church has is the wrong founder. And so it goes for everything we have discussed during the course of this lesson! Certainly, in the fulfillment of these prophecies we can observe the great wisdom and eternal plan of God for redemption (Ephesians 3:8-11)!

Study Questions

Should you be interested in being part of the church that began when the Scriptures said it would begin?

1. Old Testament Prophecies

What prophecies were made about the church in Isaiah 2:2-4?

What prophecies were made about the church in Daniel 2:31-45?

What prophecies were made about the church in Joel 2:28-35?

What prophecies were made about the church in Micah 4:1-5?

2. The Coming Of The Kingdom

Discuss how the kingdom was a central theme of the ministries of both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ?

Discuss some important aspects about John's statement that the kingdom of Heaven is "at hand."

Discuss some important aspects about Christ's teaching that He would build His church.

Discuss some important aspects about Christ's teaching that the kingdom would come prior to the death of man in Luke 9:27.

Discuss some important aspects about Jesus' instruction to His apostles to tarry in Jerusalem.

3. The Church Of Christ Is Established

In what chapter of the Bible do you read about the establishment of Christ's church? Discuss.

Discuss how the following prophecies were fulfilled:

A. Established by Christ –

B. During the lifetime of those in Luke 9:27

–

C. During the days of the Romans –

D. Beginning in Jerusalem –

E. The last days –

F. All nations –

G. God's Spirit poured out –

H. Those who called on the name of the Lord were being saved -

I. Began small and grew –

J. Everlasting –

K. Peaceful –