

# WHY ARE THERE SO MANY DIFFERENT CHURCHES?

## Part 1 – The church in prophecy and its infancy

Quite frequently we speak of the sin of denominationalism and the fact that within the pages of the New Testament we only read of ONE true church. If that is the case, why are there so many different churches today? As you drive down the street you see denomination after denomination. Where did they all come from? Today, I would like to begin a brief study of why there are so many different churches. Another possible title for this study would be, “The History of the New Testament Church.” We will briefly notice first of all (in our lesson today) the beginning of the church as defined in the New Testament. Then we will take a few weeks to examine the history of the church through the centuries since the time the New Testament was complete and in the process we will notice why some of these churches are NOT the one true church.

Today we want to notice some facts about the beginning of the ONE true church as recorded in scripture.

### I. Why this study?

- a. To know why there are so many different churches.  
Why do we need to know that? Because in the Bible we read that there is only ONE true church. Ephesians 4:4, 1:22-23, Matthew 16:18, 19, etc. So which one is the right one.
- b. To help us understand the true church and the dangers of apostasy.  
History is for us to learn from. Cf. Romans 15:4 concerning the Old Testament. 1 Corinthians 10:11,
- c. To help identify the ONE true church and to give a defense of her.  
In this study, it is my hope that we will see in many of these churches that their origin and practices are from men and NOT according to the pattern of the New Testament.

### II. God's plan in prophecy

- a. The church was in God's plans from before the foundation of the world.
- b. After the fall of man, we find in Genesis 3:15 a promise which is the beginning of God's plan being implemented through which our sins could be forgiven. In *Genesis 12:1-3*, the Lord makes a promise to Abraham in which he says, “In you all families of the earth shall be blessed.” God is beginning to implement His plan, a plan which included His church.  
*Ephesians 3:10* notes this as it states it was according to His eternal purpose
- c. ***Isaiah 2:2-4*** – In the latter days this passage notes several things.
  - i. It describes a kingdom that will be available to all nations.
  - ii. It is a church that will begin in Jerusalem
  - iii. It makes reference to its spiritual nature (not physical wars). Think of what Jesus said in John 18:36 as He stood before Pilate
- d. ***Daniel 2:44*** – “In the days of these kings.” This prophecy sets the time frame. It makes reference to a statue that Nebuchadnezzar dreams about which Daniel prophecies to establish that it was during the Roman Empire that the kingdom of God would be established. Much of the rest of Daniel goes into more detail concerning these empires.
- e. ***Jeremiah 23:5-6*** – one of many prophecies concerning the coming KING who would establish His kingdom
- f. ***Jeremiah 31:31*** – a new covenant was coming. This covenant is the New Testament and available to ALL mankind.
- g. ***Joel 2:28-32*** – another prophecy that is directly quoted in Acts 2. It deals with WHEN we will know this prophecy is fulfilled.

### III. Jesus –

- a. Born as the seed of promise – His purpose established.  
Luke 2:29-32 where Simon sees the Baby Jesus and prophecies about Him.  
Galatians 4:4-5, 3:16 – where Jesus is identified as the Seed.
- b. John the Baptist prepares the way for Him – Matthew 3:2 – He preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”  
John 1:29 – He identified Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

- c. **Matthew 16:16-18** – note the comparison between the church and the kingdom. Jesus identifies that He intended to build His church.
- d. **Mark 9:1** –He notes, there are some here who will not see death till they saw the kingdom present with power.
- e. **John 17:20-21** – His prayer for unity.
- f. Jesus dies on the cross and is resurrected. He died for our sins and in He purchases the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25-27).

#### IV. The beginning of the church

- a. **Acts 2**, on the day of Pentecost, records the beginning of the church. Acts 2:16-21 quotes Joel 2:28-32 being fulfilled at that time.
- b. ALL passages prior to this looking forward (see above)
- c. ALL passages after looking back – Acts 2:47, Colossians 1:13, Revelation 1:9
- d. Why do people have a problem distinguishing between the church and kingdom? For the same reason Jews had a problem with Jesus. John 18:36, He said, “MY kingdom is not of this world.” Today, men are looking for a physical kingdom

#### V. The church continues to develop and the gospel is preached

- a. The book of Acts (and the Epistles) records the spread of the gospel over the next few years. Acts 1:8 outlines the spreading of the gospel beginning in Jerusalem (ch. 2) and spreading throughout Judea (Ch. 3-7), Samaria (Ch. 8:9), and then to the Gentiles, and throughout the whole world (10-28, cf. Colossians 1:23). Acts 9 records the conversion of Saul, later called Paul. Acts 10 records the conversion of Cornelius and his household, the first Gentile convert.
- b. Wherever Christians went, they carried the gospel with them (Acts 8:4). And as they moved on, they left local churches (congregations) behind (cf. Acts 14:21-23 – when they had appointed elders in every church). That is what we find throughout Acts.
- c. As the church grows – the apostles and others are inspired by the Holy Spirit to reveal the word of God (John 16:13, 2 Peter 1:19-21) and to teach others.
- d. In time letters are written instructing brethren and churches how to conduct themselves. But this process is temporary. It was only to last until God’s will was written once and for all. Numerous passages point to this – 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3, 1 Cor. 13:8-12, Galatians 1:6-9, etc. With the book of Revelation, inspired writings are brought to their completion.

#### VI. Warnings of apostasy

- a. Much of the New Testament was written to address false doctrine and false teachers. In fact some books written for primary purpose of addressing false doctrines and false teachers. The book of 1 John is written to combat Gnosticism. 1 Corinthians addresses numerous corruptions that had crept into the church. Galatians, Romans and Hebrews are all written to combat Judaistic teachings that some were wanting to bind on Christians. Both 2 Peter and Jude are written to WARN about the teachings of false teachers.
- b. But in the midst of the apostles preaching and writings, there are numerous warnings that apostasies will come. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 says, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrines...” Acts 20:28-30 – wolves will enter in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Paul informs the brethren that before the Lord returns there must first come a falling away. 1 Timothy 4:1-3 also warns that “in latter times some will depart from the faith...”

And thus we set the stage that over the next several centuries will see everything about the pattern of the church -from its organization to its worship and work - change and eventually evolve to where we are now. In this study we will examine what happens.