

~ Chapter 1 ~

How Many Churches?

“Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). These are the words of Jesus. Yet, thousands have ignored the fact that not more than one church can be built upon one rock! In this lesson, we will discuss the fact: THE LORD BUILT BUT ONE CHURCH. Paul commanded we “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). It is mandatory that we seek out and find the scriptures that prove beyond question there is but one church.

In an issue of Good Housekeeping Magazine (March 1980), J. Gordon Melton listed some 1,200 religious organizations claiming acceptance before the eyes of God. Only those whose god is Satan (i.e. Satanic worship, cults and/or worship of demons) did not fit the criteria for what Melton calls “Christianity in America.” Obviously, those fitting his criterion suggest themselves as being in agreement with the New Testament; his listing including most Jewish religions and far-eastern religions which are practiced in the United States. While they admit the New Testament is not always used as their sole rule and authority, they

nonetheless claim they are not condemned by the New Testament.

Any serious Bible student sees readily the fallacy in such reasoning. Such suggestions simply cannot be truthful! God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). It is Man and not God that has developed the idea of “one church is as good as another church.” If we can determine Jesus built but one church, then we also determine mankind is wrong when sanctioning and promoting more than one church and/or any religion disagreeing in doctrine or practice with the New Testament scriptures.

How Many Churches?

(Outline of Lesson)

Text: Matthew 16:13-20

I. Scriptural terms for the church

A. Various names, EACH INDICATING JUST ONE

1. Body – Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13
2. Bride – Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 21:2, 9
3. Kingdom – Colossians 1:13; Acts 8:12; 1 Corinthians 15:24
4. Church – Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; 1 Timothy 3:14-15; Ephesians 3:10

- B. Oneness in Christ shows oneness of church
 - 1. Define: THE = this certain ONE
 - 2. John 17:20-21
 - 3. Matthew 17:5; 3:17
 - 4. Ephesians 4:1-6

II. The kingdom in prophecy

- A. Daniel 2:44-45
- B. Isaiah 2:2-3 (see also Luke 24: 45-48)
- C. Isaiah 35:8-10 (see also John 14:6)

III. From whence come “other churches?”

- A. 1 John 2:18-19
- B. Acts 20:28-31
- C. Galatians 1:6-9
- D. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
- E. 2 Timothy 4:1-10

Conclusion:

As there is only ONE Christ (one Head, one King, one Husband, etc.), it is clear there is ONE church. If it takes more than one church to please God, why did He not tell us which ones?

Discussion:

Fewer subjects create more disagreement than the question, “How many churches?” But note the TERMS used to describe the church: BODY, BRIDE, KINGDOM. Each one is SINGULAR. Just as Jesus

Himself is ONE (Ephesians 4:4-6), the church is ONE. Compare also this fact: No rightfully formed body has more than one head; no honorable marriage has more than one husband for one bride (see 2 Corinthians 11:2) and no respected kingdom of reputation and strength has more than one king. Do we dare believe God would allow anything less than the VERY BEST of unity between the Head and body, Husband and bride, King and kingdom?

Second, we must note the church in prophesy, Daniel was not the first to prophesy concerning the church; however, he is one of the best remembered prophets. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar contained the following:

- A. A great image, showing the kingdoms of earth from the greatest to the least
- B. Head was fine gold (Nebuchadnezzar – Babylon Empire)
- C. Breast and arms of silver (Medo-Persian Empire)
- D. Belly and thighs of brass (Macedonian Empire)
- E. Feet and toes of iron and clay mixed (division of Roman Empire and government)
- F. Stone cut out without hands (church)

As you read the passage (Daniel 2:31-45), you must remember the church (just one) was in the mind of God from the beginning (Ephesians 3:1-11), and therefore the dream and the interpretation thereof would come

true. The stone “which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner: (Acts 4:10-11) is Christ who established His kingdom in the days of the Roman kings. The point is, neither the dream nor the interpretation of the dream described more than one stone! Verse 44 of Daniel 2 is very specific when Daniel says, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

Look also at Isaiah 2:2-3. “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Now examine Luke 24:45-48 noting Jesus demanded the exact same thing of the apostles! How many houses did the Lord establish in Jerusalem? According to the prophesy and the same statement of Jesus, **THERE WAS ONLY ONE HOUSE ESTABLISHED IN JERUSALEM.** Note also 1 Timothy 3:14-15 states the house of God is the church!

Many ask the question in all sincerity, “Since God only established ONE church, from where did all these others come?” The answer demands a sad but true commentary of mankind. The Biblical answer is found in 1 John 2:18-19; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-10. The chart below illustrates these verses quite well. Study it and see the Lord’s kingdom shall never be destroyed!

CHURCH OF CHRIST (Acts 2; Hebrews 12:28; Daniel 2:44)	
33 A.D.	Never Changed
THE FALLING AWAY (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-2)	
325-606 A.D.	Roman Catholic Church
1054 A.D.	Greek Catholic Church
REFORMATION EFFORTS	
1330-1384 A.D.	John Wycliff – English
1483-1546 A.D.	Martin Luther – German
1484-1531 A.D.	Ulrich Zwingli – Swiss
1509-1564 A.D.	John Calvin – French
1514-1562 A.D.	John Knox – Scottish
1703-1791 A.D.	John Wesley – English
RESTORATION	
1809 A.D.	Efforts began to restore the New Testament Church

As we conclude this part of our study, the evidence is clear; there is but one church established by Jesus Christ. We must realize it cost an enormous price (Acts 20:28); the same price that redeemed us (1 Peter 1:18-25). Once these facts are known, how can anyone with an ounce of compassion mock Jesus Christ by creating man-made religious organizations claiming to be “a church” or even an organization daring to boast acceptance with the Almighty?

Questions on Chapter 1

1. Upon how many rocks did Jesus promise to build how many churches?
2. Name at least three other terms for the church and indicate if they are ever found in the plural form when pertaining to the church.
3. Paul states at Romans 16:16, “The churches of Christ salute you.” Does this mean there is more than one CHURCH, or more than one CONGREGATION of the one church of Christ? Explain your answer.

4. The Jews had a custom that the number seven was a complete number (Matthew 18:21-23). If this is correct, does Ephesians 4:4-6 indicate a completion in God's plan?

5. Who was the prophet that foretold the coming of the church its power over all people of all nations? In your answer, state the dream and its interpretation.

6. How do Isaiah's prophesy and Luke's recorded words of Jesus concerning the coming of the church correspond?

7. How did "other churches" get started? How many of them find favor with God and authorization within the New Testament?

~ Chapter 2 ~

The Time and Place of Beginning

For many, proving the church of Christ takes more than undeniable evidence of just ONE church. Those contending their religion is right and acceptable with God will agree there is ONE church. However, they would have us believe “all religions are a part of that one universal church.” Unfortunately, several endorse such a falsehood and say, “It does not matter what you are a member of religiously, as long as you believe and teach God, Christ and the Spirit and offer heaven as a reward.” As one Christian often says, “Most people believe all anyone has to do to get to heaven is die.” Indeed dear student, man cannot distort God’s Word and succeed. It is necessary we accept His Word, and His Word only regarding the proving of all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21) pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

In this lesson, we wish to deal explicitly with this fact: The ONE CHURCH has a specific time and place of beginning. We need to realize God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5; 34:14), and His desire to have ONE CHURCH limits all others to a non-existent state so far as He is concerned (Matthew 15:10-14). Thus, in order

for the ONE CHURCH to be the church He had in mind from the beginning (Ephesians 3:10-11), we must note the time and place of its beginning. Any religious organization with a beginning within another time and place than the ONE CHURCH found within the New Testament simply cannot be the ONE CHURCH of our Lord!

The Time and Place of Beginning
(Outline of Lesson)

Text: Luke 24:44-53

- I. The inspired prophesy of time and place
 - A. Note: Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:21
 - B. 1 Timothy 3:14-15
 - C. Isaiah 2:2-3
 - D. Micah 4:1-2
 - E. Zechariah 1:16
 - F. Daniel 2:44
 - G. Note the sequence: Luke 24:44-49
 1. Christ had to die, be buried and rise from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
 2. Apostles had to tarry in Jerusalem
 3. Proclamation of the gospel had to start in Jerusalem

- II. The fulfillment of the prophesy
 - A. Death, burial and resurrection of Christ – 1 Corinthians 15:1-4
 - B. Holy Spirit could not come until Christ had returned to heaven
 - 1. John 16:7
 - 2. Acts 1:9
 - C. Apostles tarried in Jerusalem – Acts 1:12
 - D. Apostles received the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:1-4
 - E. The gospel first preached at Jerusalem
 - 1. Acts 2:14-42
 - 2. Joel 2:28-32
 - F. Message had to include repentance and remission of sins
 - 1. Luke 24:47
 - 2. Acts 2:38
 - G. The church begun
 - 1. Note again the fulfillment of prophesy
 - 2. Acts 2:41-47

Conclusion:

- 1. Matthew 16:18
- 2. Ephesians 2:11-22
- 3. 1 Corinthians 15:24

Discussion:

Whenever God did anything, He had a plan (reason) for doing that task. This is especially true in relationship to the church. It was in His mind from the beginning of all things (Ephesians 3:10-11). A careful

study of the Old Testament reveals many examples of the church foreshadowed (the ark, the building of the tabernacle and temple). The prophets speak of it to come: Zechariah, Isaiah, Daniel, Micah, and the Psalms. It is easy to understand that God had planned a specific time and place to begin the church.

Our text (Luke 24:44-53) shows the words of Jesus concerning the time and place at which the church would begin. Note these facts:

- A. "All things must be fulfilled" (verse 44)
- B. "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead" (verse 46)
- C. "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name" (verse 47)
- D. "Beginning at Jerusalem" (verse 47)

While this could be considered prophesy in its own right, it is in fact the repeating of prophesy. Never in all the years of the Bible will one find a contradiction. Jesus declared He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). He further said that every "jot and tittle" would be fulfilled concerning prophesies of Himself (Matthew 5:18). Isaiah's prophesy is now brought to its climax as Jesus explains its accomplishment. (Compare Luke 24:44-49 with Isaiah 2:1-4).

Of the prophecies, listed on the lesson outline, you will note each speaks of the following facts:

- A. The house of God
- B. The city of Jerusalem
- C. The last days

Remember also REASON (Isaiah 1:18) requires we first accumulate facts, think seriously on these facts, and then reach the conclusion only the facts will allow! The earnest student knows the coming of Christ to die for our sins, to be buried and to rise from the dead, concluded the Old Law (Colossians 2:14); and thus began the last "dispensation." After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the TIME was right for the beginning of the church. All the religions of the olden times would be too old to be the ONE God had in His mind from the beginning to save man from sin. Even the religion of Moses, which God established for Israel, His chosen people of that time, was now completed and would be no longer acceptable in the sight of God (Hebrews 10:1-10). Just so, any religion beginning AFTER this established time of beginning would be too young to be the church God had in His mind from the beginning. THERE IS ONLY ONE RIGHT TIME OF BEGINNING FOR THE ONE CHURCH.

Now that the time is right, what about the PLACE of beginning? To answer this, it is needful to follow the sequence of events. Christ had died, had been buried and had been raised from the dead. This constitutes the

gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This had to be accomplished before the apostles could preach; else there could be no gospel to preach! They could not preach the gospel without inspired guidance (John 16:7-13). Further, that inspiration could not come upon the apostles until they were gathered in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:47). Read again the verses of the Old Testament speaking of the word going forth "from Jerusalem."

According to Acts 2:1, we learn the day of Pentecost was fully come, and the apostles were gathered in one place. Where was this place? From Acts 1:12-14, this upper room was in Jerusalem. Now we have the right place according to the prophesy! From the contents of Acts 2, we learn these apostles were the recipients of the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The message they preached was the gospel (read carefully Acts 2:14-36). When this gospel was heard and believed, the hearers were pricked in their hearts and asked what they should do to rid themselves of the sin of murdering Christ (verse 37). Peter told them to REPENT and BE BAPTIZED every one of them, in the name of Jesus Christ (i.e. by His authority – Colossians 3:17). This is the beginning of THE kingdom, THE church that was prophesied! Acts 2:41: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Verse 47 of the same chapter says, "And the Lord added to THE CHURCH daily such as should be saved." He could

not have added them something that did not exist. The church obviously existed! For the first time, THE CHURCH was made available to the souls of men and women. Before, it had been in the mind of God (Ephesians 3:10-11), and now it is made known to obedient souls!

From all this we can note any religious organization claiming to be acceptable in God's sight, yet has its origin in time and place other than what we have just studied, can not possibly be the ONE CHURCH God sanctions! It would either be too old or too young to be the church God had in His mind from the beginning. For any religious organization to claim a head other than Christ, would not permit that body to be what God has authorized. The same is true if any other king is claimed, or another husband. It is plain there is but ONE CHURCH and it has but ONE TIME AND PLACE OF BEGINNING.

Questions on Chapter 2

1. Name at least three verses of the Old Testament prophesying the coming of the church.

2. At what time and in what place did the church of Christ begin? Prove your answer.

3. What things had to take place before the church could have its beginning?

4. What is the only message that was permitted to be preached on the first day of the church?

5. What were the results of that message?

This is a sample of the material contained in
Proving the Church of Christ
by Michael J. Davis
Copyright © 2018
All rights reserved

To order single copies, visit:
store.gospelarmory.com/product/proving-the-church-of-christ/

To place a bulk order (10 or more copies)
and receive a discount, visit:
www.gospelarmory.com/bulk/

Thank you!

