

**"The Earthly Kingdom of Jesus Christ"**

**Part 29**

**Matthew 16:13-18**

**Introduction:** Two weeks ago, in our Kingdom study we began to look in some detail at what God is doing in this interim age while the Kingdom is in a state of postponement. God is not fulfilling Israel's Kingdom promises at this time that will happen at the end of the Tribulation when the Kingdom comes. In this age God's work with the nation of Israel has been interrupted as He now works with the church. The church is not "plan B" as many believe we are teaching. The church was planned from before the foundation of the world.

**Ephesians 1:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

<sup>4</sup> *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

The church was in the plan of God long before the world was ever created therefore the church is not "plan B" as some claim we are teaching. Last week we started on several questions concerning the church.

**1. Is the Church the Kingdom?**

In our study we determined, with Scripture, that the church is not the Kingdom. We looked at several points to prove this:

**A. Jesus is not the King of the church.**

Nowhere in the Bible do we read that Jesus is the King of the church. There are several metaphors which describe the relationship between Jesus and His Church but King and Kingdom are not one of them.

- ❖ **Head and the Body**
- ❖ **Vine and Branches**
- ❖ **Groom and Bride**
- ❖ **Foundation and Stones/Cornerstone and Building**

**B. The Church is never called the Kingdom.**

The Church is called the body, the branches, the bride, the wife, the building/house, the stones, but the Church is never called the Kingdom anywhere in the Bible.

**C. The Church does not portray the characteristics of the Kingdom as described in the Old Testament.**

Notice the words of Walvoord:

*"The Christian era has been no golden age of righteousness nor has the church conquered the world. It is more accurate to recognize that the world has to a large degree possessed the church."*

**D. The Church is an heir of the Kingdom.**

As an heir of the Kingdom, the church cannot be THE Kingdom.

Tonight, in our study we are going to consider another question concerning the church:

**2. When did the Church begin?**

**Part 1**

There are many views about when the church began. Those who are in the Reformed Camp believe the church is made up of the elect from all ages and therefore they teach that the church began with the first saved people which would be Adam and Eve. Some of those of Reformed Theology believe the church began with Israel.

This is illustrated by the headings found at the top of The Thompson Chain Reference Bible in the book of Isaiah: "God's mercy to the Church" "God avengeth His church" "His great mercies to the Church" "The church comforted" "The restoration of the Church" "The church exhorted" "God will comfort His church" "The prophet's zeal for the church" "Confession and complaint of the church" etc.

This is a popular teaching today. Then there are the Ultra-dispensationalists who believe that the church began with the Apostle Paul. There are three beliefs within this group. Some believe the church began in Acts 9, some in Acts 13, and some in Acts 28. We believe that the church began in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost. But how can we prove this? That is exactly what we will do this evening.

**A. Jesus and John the Baptist spoke of the church in the future tense.**

**Notice Matthew 16:18**

It is very clear in this verse that Jesus is speaking of something that is yet in the future. He did not say, "I am building My church" not did he say, "I will continue to build My church." Jesus' statement to Peter is in the future tense so therefore we can be sure the

church did not exist in the Old Testament or during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. Let us notice a statement made by John the Baptist.

**Matthew 3:11**

<sup>11</sup> *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:*

John tells his listeners that Spirit baptism, which happens to every born-again member of the body of Jesus Christ, would be something that was yet future to his day. This too helps us to understand that the church could not have existed in the Old Testament.

**B. Jesus did not become the Head of the Church until after His ascension.**

If the church existed in the Old Testament, then it would have existed without a Head.

**Ephesians 5:23**

<sup>23</sup> *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*

Here we see that Jesus is the Head of the church but when did He become the Head?

**Ephesians 1:19-23**

<sup>19</sup> *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

<sup>20</sup> *Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.*

<sup>21</sup> *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

<sup>22</sup> *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.*

<sup>23</sup> *Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

Here we see that Jesus became the Head of the church when He was seated at the right hand of the Father which happened after His ascension. So, if the church existed in the Old Testament, then it existed with no Head.

**C. Spiritual gifts were not given until after the ascension of Jesus Christ.**

Spiritual gifts are very important within the body of Jesus Christ because they are for the purpose of edifying the church.

**1 Corinthians 12:4-7**

<sup>4</sup> Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

<sup>5</sup> And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

<sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

<sup>7</sup> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

Here we see that the spiritual gifts given to all members of the body of Jesus Christ are to profit all. Now let us notice when the gifts were given.

**Ephesians 4:7-12**

<sup>7</sup> But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

<sup>8</sup> Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

<sup>9</sup> (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)

<sup>10</sup> He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

<sup>11</sup> And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

<sup>12</sup> For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

The spiritual gifts were not given until after the ascension therefore if the church existed in the Old Testament it had no means of edification and it had no Head.

**D. The Church existed before Paul was saved.**

Paul was saved in Acts 9 so we need to look at some verses before his conversion.

**Acts 5:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

<sup>11</sup> And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

Here is the judgment that came upon Ananias and Sapphira and we see that fear fell on the CHURCH and this was before Paul's conversion. Let us notice another mention of the church before Paul was saved.

### Acts 8:1-3

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

<sup>2</sup> And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

<sup>3</sup> As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Here we see that Paul persecuted the church before he was saved, therefore it existed before he was saved. Now the ultra-dispensationalist claims that this is the Jewish church. They will claim there was a Jewish church and a Gentile church. But does the Bible teach there are two churches? NO!

### John 10:14-16

<sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

<sup>15</sup> As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

<sup>16</sup> And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Notice in verse 16 Jesus says there is ONE FOLD and ONE SHEPHERD There are not two churches; there is one church. When the church began it was Jewish but in chapter 10 of Acts the Gentiles were brought into the same church that the Jews were in.

### Ephesians 4:1-6

*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

<sup>2</sup> *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

<sup>3</sup> *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

<sup>4</sup> ***There is one body**, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

<sup>5</sup> *One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

<sup>6</sup> *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

### **Galatians 3:28**

<sup>28</sup> *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for **ye are all one in Christ Jesus.***

There is one more verse that clearly defeats the belief that the church started with Paul.

### **Romans 16:7**

<sup>7</sup> *Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, **who also were in Christ before me.***

If we did a word study on the words, "IN CHRIST" we would see that this is a reference to those who are members of the body of Jesus Christ/the church. Let us notice just a few uses of the phrase:

### **Ephesians 2:6-10**

<sup>6</sup> *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places **in Christ Jesus:***

<sup>7</sup> *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

<sup>8</sup> *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

<sup>9</sup> *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

<sup>10</sup> *For we are his workmanship, created **in Christ Jesus** unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Getting back to the point, the Scripture makes it very clear that the church existed before Paul's conversion.

**Conclusion:**

All that we looked at tonight shows us that the church did not exist in the Old Testament nor did it begin with Paul. So, when did it start? Come back next week and we will see that the church began in Acts 2.