

THE CHURCH IS ESTABLISHED

The old prophet Isaiah made a prediction. "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:2, 3 ESV) What was Isaiah talking about?

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The "house of the Lord" to be established was the Lord's dynasty, that is, the Lord's kingdom. That phrase "the house of" was an idiom by Isaiah's time that referred to a king's family, meaning his dynasty. For instance, David's family is referred to as "the house of David." (1 Samuel 20:16) 2 Samuel 3:1 says there was a long war between the "house of Saul" and the "house of David." These were two families at war over the throne of ancient Israel.

A Babylonian king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar saw a vision which was interpreted by a Jewish young man by the name of Daniel. In his vision King Nebuchadnezzar saw the rise of four large kingdoms. After his own kingdom there would arise the Medo-Persian kingdom. After the Persians came Alexander the Great and the Greeks. After the Greeks came the Roman kingdom. Then Daniel predicted, "In the days of those kings (the Roman kings) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever...." (Daniel 2:44 ESV) Isaiah and Nebuchadnezzar were seeing the same thing. They were seeing the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

About 550 years after Nebuchadnezzar, Luke tells us that it was in the days of Augustus (emperor of Rome) that Jesus Christ was born. (Luke 2:1) Mark announced, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, (Mark quoted) "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" [So] John

appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." (Mark 1:1-5 ESV)

And, after 550 years, so began the announcements of the nearness of the kingdom of God. John, the forerunner of Christ, preached to the Jewish people that the "kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2) After John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, Jesus too began to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17) We are told that Jesus "Went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people." (Matthew 4:23)

Several months later, Jesus commissioned his apostles to go and preach that "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 10:7) Around the middle of His 3-year ministry, Jesus asked his disciples "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they [replied], "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [Jesus] said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter [spoke up and confessed], "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock [the great ledge of rock of Peter's confession] I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall [have been, NASB] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall [have been] loosed in heaven." Then [Jesus] strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." (Matthew 16:13-21)

In Jesus' teaching about the "Kingdom of heaven" he often used the phrase the "kingdom of God." You can easily see this in Matthew chapter 21. So the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God is the same Kingdom. Furthermore, when Jesus promised to build his church, he promised also to give the keys of the Kingdom to Peter and the other apostles. Therefore we see that the Kingdom and the church are the same institution. We can also see this in the writings of Jesus' apostles. For instance, the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae and said

that they, the church members at Colossae, had been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear son. (Colossians 1:13). So the Son's kingdom and the Son's church are the same institution.

Notice also from Colossians 1:13 that the church Jesus promised to build was in fact a reality! It was no longer in the future; the Colossians were in it! The church of Christ was in existence when Paul wrote this letter around 65 A.D. Therefore, between 27 A.D. and 65 A.D. the church of Christ was established. When Paul wrote to Jesus' church in Rome, in the letter we call "Romans", he told the church in Rome that "the churches of Christ salute you." (Romans 16:16) Paul was in Corinth, Greece around the year 57 or 58 A.D. when he wrote that letter to the Christians in Rome. Therefore as early as 57 A.D. the church of Christ was in existence.

John the Baptizer said the "kingdom was at hand." Jesus preached that the "kingdom of heaven is at hand" and that He would build the church. So **when** did Jesus begin building His Church? It was 50 days after Jesus' resurrection. Following Jesus' resurrection he was on the earth for 40 days. Luke tells us this in his book to Theophilus. Luke wrote, "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, **"you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."** (Acts 1:1-5 ESV)

No it was not "many days" after Jesus' ascension. In fact, it was only 10 days later that the apostles were all gathered together in one place. "And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4)

This was the day that the Jewish people called "Pentecost." They had one of these days every year and the feast **always** began on the 50th day following the

Sabbath Day of the Passover week. This means that the Pentecost feast always began on the first day of the week, or the day we call Sunday. On that particular Pentecost Day a great many Jewish people heard about what was happening with the apostles of Christ. They began to gather and ultimately a huge crowd saw Peter stand up with the other apostles and begin to preach, for the first time, the death, burial, resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus Christ back to heaven. Peter ended his sermon by saying, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words [Peter] bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." ([Acts 2:36-41 ESV](#))

And thus began the church of Jesus Christ with the repentance and baptism of nearly 3,000 Jewish believers. Who were these 3,000 added to? They were added to the Lord, and to the apostles. The apostle Paul wrote years later, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." ([Romans 6:3-4 ESV](#)) That was only the beginning, for Acts 2:47 says that "The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved." ([Acts 2:47 KJV](#)) To the Galatian Christians, Paul wrote, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Here is the church of Christ in existence from the Day of Pentecost onward. The church of Christ was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Is it possible that the church of Christ is still in existence today? Yes, friends, it is not only possible, but it is necessary because Jesus said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." ([Matthew 16:18](#)) When the seed of the good news of Christ is faithfully preached in the name of Christ, modern people can still believe it and obey the gospel of Christ. Modern believers can obey the gospel the same

way as those people on the birthday of the church. Modern people can repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. The everlasting Lord Jesus then adds them to His church, the kingdom of God. It can be said of modern people like it was said of the first century Colossians, "you have been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear son." (Colossians 1:13)

Friends, are you a Christian, a member of the church of Jesus Christ?