



# The New Testament Church

## *The Origin of the Church*

### I. VARYING VIEWS OF THE CHURCH'S ORIGINS

#### A. The Church Began in the Old Testament

1. Source
  - a. This view is taught by many, if not all, reformed or covenant theologians.
  - b. This viewpoint suggests that there is a one line of God's people stretching throughout mankind's history and that these saved people (often identified as elect) make-up the church.
2. Outcome
  - a. If this be the case, the church
    - (1) Has no New Testament significance
    - (2) Is made up of the elect/saved of all ages, and therefore must have begun with the first person who was "saved"
    - (3) Takes the place of Israel and becomes the beneficiary of Israel's promises
  - b. Many who promote this viewpoint suggest that baptism takes the place of circumcision.

#### B. The Church Began During the Ministry of Christ

1. Source
  - a. This view was taught by many early Baptists.
  - b. Even today, many Bible believing Christians hold to this view.
2. Arguments
  - a. The principle of the church was established (Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:20).
  - b. It had a Head—Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:8).
  - c. It had a pastor—Jesus Christ (John 10:11, 14).
  - d. It was called a "flock" (Matthew 26:31; Luke 12:32; Acts 20:28-29).
  - e. Discipline was enacted (Matthew 18:15-17).
  - f. Baptism was established (Matthew 28:16-20).
  - g. The Lord's Supper was established (Matthew 26:26-29).
  - h. The church had a treasurer (John 12:6; John 13:29).
  - i. Christ sang praises in the church (Psalm 22:22; Hebrews 2:12; Mark 14:26).
  - j. The church was commissioned (Matthew 28:16-20).
  - k. The church held a prayer meeting (Acts 1:14).
  - l. The church held a business meeting (Acts 1:15-22).
  - m. The church elected officers (Acts 1:23-26).
  - n. Three thousand souls were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47).



## 3. Outcome

- a. Everything in the gospel accounts is applicable to the New Testament church.
- b. John's baptism is often viewed as no different than the present baptism offered to the newborn babe in Christ.

## C. The Church Began at Pentecost

## 1. Source

- a. This is the view held by the majority of moderate dispensationalists.
- b. This, along with the viewpoint that the church began during the earthly ministry of Christ, is most prominently accepted among many Bible believing Christians.

## 2. Arguments

- a. There could be no church in the world until Christ's death to redeem the church with His blood.
- b. There could be no church in the world until Christ arose from the dead to provide the church with resurrection life.
- c. There could be no church until Christ ascended on high to become the church's head and intercessor.
- d. There could be no church until the advent of the Holy Ghost.

## 3. Outcome

- a. The body present in the early chapters of the book of Acts is not the same body as was present during the earthly ministry of Christ.
- b. Although some truths from the gospel accounts certainly carry over to the New Testament church, it is not guaranteed that everything in the gospels is directly applicable to the New Testament church.
- c. It is possible and likely that some of the truths revealed after the ascension of Christ were unknown during the earthly ministry of Christ and before.

## D. The Church Began During the Ministry of the Apostle Paul

## 1. Source

- a. This view is held by many who would be considered hyper-dispensationalists.
- b. Some who hold to this view also go so far as to say that water baptism is not an ordinance to be maintained for the body of Christ.

2. Arguments—Taken from *A Dispensational Theology* by Charles Baker

- a. There was already a church in existence at Pentecost, but this was not the body of Christ.
- b. At Pentecost, Peter proclaimed that Israel's last days had arrived (Acts 2:17), but he did not suggest the same about the first days of the Body of Christ.
- c. The phrase, "the church which is his body," is only used by Paul. When he uses the phrase "the church which is his body," he is implying that there is another church which is not Christ's body.



- d. Pentecost primarily, if not exclusive, dealt with the nation of Israel.
  - e. Paul declared that it was because of the blinding of Israel that his message of reconciliation had been sent to the Gentiles, but at Pentecost Israel had not yet been blinded.
  - f. Not only was Israel not blinded at Pentecost, but it is here that we find the first real offer of the kingdom to Israel. It was because of their rejection of the King and the kingdom that a new dispensation under Paul was ushered in.
  - g. The Body of Christ is a joint-body of Jews and Gentiles, but at Pentecost there is no mention of the Gentiles.
  - h. At Pentecost, the believers received water baptism for the remission of sins. There is no record that Paul ever practiced baptism for this purpose.
  - i. Everything that happened at Pentecost was in direct fulfillment of prophecy. Peter quoted Joel and David in Acts chapter 2, but Paul said that the truth about the Body of Christ was a “mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to his saints” (Colossians 1:24-26).
3. Outcome
- a. Water baptism and the Lord’s supper may not be applicable to the New Testament church, but rather are viewed as Jewish ordinances for a Jewish body.
  - b. The early chapters of the book of Acts have no application to the New Testament church seeing that it was a mystery until Paul revealed it in his ministry.

## II. CONSIDERING A DUAL BEGINNING

### A. A Future Church (Matthew 16:18)

1. When Christ gave His promise concerning the church, He described the church as being future.
2. The Lord gave a timeframe for this church in the passage, but we will deal with that later.

### B. A Present Church (Matthew 18:15-17; Hebrews 2:12)

1. The Lord spoke of a church as though it was present tense (Matthew 18:15-17). This would suggest that there was a church in existence during the Lord’s earthly ministry.
2. It would seem as though the Lord sang praise in the church (Hebrews 2:12).
3. Nothing happened in between Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 that would lead us to believe Christ built His church.
4. Apparently, even while the Lord was promising to build a church, there was already a church in existence.