

When Did The Church Begin?

Bible Answers About The Church

There are different ideas about when the church began. There are those who speak of it as beginning in the Old Testament period, though such a view is a misunderstanding of what the church is. Others believe that it began with the ministry of John the Baptist. Still others believe that the Lord's kingdom has not yet been established. With such different answers to our question it is no wonder people are confused.

The correct answer is rather easily determined, if one notices the tense of the verbs used in reference to the church. Throughout the Old Testament all references to the Lord's kingdom are future. Notice just a couple of them:

"Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will 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 concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2-3).

"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever" (Daniel 2:44).

To the surprise of many, every reference to the church found in the four gospels is also stated in terms of the future. The fact is that Christ lived His entire life under the Law of Moses and in the keeping of the Ten Commandments. The Mosaic Dispensation continued in full sway until Christ died upon the cross, thus bringing an end to the Law of Moses (Colossians 2:14-17). During the Lord's life He did teach a number of things that would be a part of His kingdom, but the kingdom, or church, had not been established until after He died on the cross. Both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ spoke of the kingdom as being at hand or nearby or ready to be established (Matthew 3:2; 4:17).

Jesus promised, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19). At this point, the church had not been established because Jesus said, "I will build." In addition to that Jesus said to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Since Jesus used the terms church and kingdom together and since He would

not build something and give Peter the keys to something else then it is obvious that the church and the kingdom are one and the same.

Jesus also said to some, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1). The church/ kingdom would come in the lifetime of some then living. Those who teach that the kingdom has not yet been established are absolutely wrong or we have some people still living who are 2000 years old. After the death and resurrection of our Lord, He said, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

In Acts chapter 2 we read of the power coming upon the apostles and the preaching of the gospel taking place and people obeying the gospel. At the close of that chapter we read, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). From this point on the church is spoken of as in existence. The first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ is the day the church or kingdom was established.

Paul could write, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). One could not be translated into the kingdom of His dear Son if the kingdom or church was not in existence. Until Acts chapter two the church or kingdom was always in the future. However, after the second chapter of Acts the church or kingdom is seen as being in existence.

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