

# ECCLESIOLOGY: GOD'S PLANS AND PURPOSES FOR HIS CHURCH

## WEEK 3: THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH AND DISTINCTIONS WITH THE WORLD AND ISRAEL

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

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- When the word “church” is mentioned, several different things may come to mind.
  - Is it an event?
  - A building?
  - Local, universal??
  - What about a college campus ministry– what is that?
- We want to explore what Scripture says about the nature and purposes of the church.
- This class will study the topic of the church, explore the distinctions with Para-church ministries and Israel and the world.
- We will also discuss the importance of leadership, ordinances, and marks of healthy churches.
- As we desire to plant and revitalize churches, we should understand, “When is a church a church?” and “When is a church in good health?”
- Our goal in this class is to develop a proper biblical view of the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ, THE CHURCH.
- **Class Schedule:**
  - September 7: Introduction and the Nature of the Church
  - September 14: Parachurch Ministries and Missions Agencies
  - **September 21: The Beginning of the Church and Distinctions with the World and Israel**
  - September 28: Descriptions, Purpose, and Mission of the Church
  - October 5: What Defines a Healthy and Faithful Established Church?
  - October 12: The Leadership of the Church
  - October 19: Ordinances and Worship

## INTRODUCTION

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**Acts 20:28** ~ Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

**Ephesians 5:24-27** ~ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

**Titus 2:14** ~ Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds

- The church is so precious to Christ that He gave His life for it! WHEN?
- Jesus gave himself for whom? Jesus whom? Jesus presents before the Father with no spot or wrinkle, holy and blameless whom?
- A right understanding of the beginning and end of the church age, according to Scriptures, helps us avoid reading the Bible wrong and avoiding costly errors.

## THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

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- Inadequate Suggestions:

**Adam?**

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“As New Testament saints are saved through faith in the Christ of history, so Old Testament saints were saved through faith in the Christ of prophecy...And so Isaiah, David, Abraham, Abel and a host of others were members of one body of Christ, His church. And if we assume, as undoubtedly we may, that Adam and Eve believed in the promise of God [Gen 3:15]...then it may be asserted that they constituted the first Christian church.”  
-R. B. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, 21-22

- Members of the body of Christ depend on the once for all sacrifice made by Christ to atone for sin. That sacrifice was accomplished and guarantees the believer's resurrection, the church's resurrection at the rapture (1 Cor 15:55).
- Adam did not have these promises. Jesus is described as fulfilling what Adam could not (Romans 5), but Adam was not the inauguration of the church.

## Abraham?

“The church under the new dispensation is identical with that of the old. It is not a new church, but one and the same. It is the same olive tree (Rom 11:17, 24). It is founded in the same covenant, the covenant made with Abraham.” -Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3:549

- Not the church. No sacrifice made, no Holy Spirit given, inclusion not based on the sacrificial merit of Christ Jesus, the foundation of what Christ built.
- Abraham began the ethnic line of the nation of Israel.

## Jesus?

“The church, therefore, was established in the days of Jesus’ sojourn in the flesh and the work of its construction was begun with the material prepared by John the Baptist, later the twelve apostles of our Lord.”  
-R. V. Clearwaters, The Local Church in the New Testament, 26

- Jesus provided the promise to his disciples: “I will build my church”. And then he did. Through them.

## Paul? (hyper-dispensationalism/ultra-dispensationalism)

- **Ultradispensationalism** delays the inauguration of the church which exists today until the time of Paul
  - Exclusively church doctrine is found in Romans-Philemon.<sup>1</sup> That’s it. **Acts 28:28.**
- **Hyper-D:** Adds another stage- the “Jewish Church” before the “Christian Church” sometime.
- A different church (a Jewish church) is said to have existed in the earlier portion of the book of Acts.
- “Ultradispensationalism is a niche doctrine of Christian belief that believes that the Christian Church began with Paul’s statement made to the Jewish leaders at Rome near the end of the Book of Acts with Acts 28:28 stating: ‘Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it’” (Wikipedia – entry “Hyperdispensationalism”)
- A variant of this is **mid-dispensationalism**, beginning the church in **Acts 9 or Acts 13.**

### Consequences for both Mid-D and Ultra-D:

- The consequences are that what occurred in Acts 2-9 are not for Gentile believers
- Water baptism is not necessary for any believers.

<sup>1</sup> Les Feldick, <https://www.lesfeldick.org/lesqa-b.html> will only apply Hebrews to those Jews under a different gospel than Paul preached: “Paul’s writings to the Gentiles (the Church) are the thirteen books of Romans through Philemon. Although Paul also wrote the book of Hebrews, he wrote it to the Jewish believers who had been saved under the gospel of the kingdom, the teaching of the twelve apostles of the circumcision (Jews). Hebrews was not written to the Gentiles.”

- The four Gospels are for Jews only and have no bearing on the church (Acts 16:18; 18:15-20)
- Some hold that NONE of the Old Testament applies or is binding for Christians today, rather only holding to the Law of Christ.<sup>2</sup>
- They also think the Jewish Church began in Acts 2-9 is what will be reestablished in the Millennial Kingdom.
- Some hold to soul sleep, annihilationism, and even universalism.
- The greatest consequence is thinking Paul preached a *different Gospel* than the other apostles.
- Grace Bible College in Grand Rapids holds to this; therefore, they do not teach believer's baptism

## Pentecost

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- See Acts 2
- How do we know Pentecost marks the beginning of the church?

### 1. It is proved by the promise of Christ in Matthew 16:18 – the church was yet future

**Matthew 16:18** ~ I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will (future) build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

- Remember the flow of thought in Matthew which indicates a new program:

**Matthew 1-10** ~ Shows the credibility of Christ as King (birth, baptism, temptation, teachings) 6

**Matthew 11-12** ~ Opposition to Christ by Jewish leaders

**Matthew 13** ~ Parables of the mysteries of the kingdom (i.e. the time of his rejection to the time of his acceptance)

**Matthew 14-15** ~ More opposition

**Matthew 16** ~ Christ reveals His plans to build His church (i.e. a new program)

- Jesus was not surprised when the Jews did not accept His offer of the kingdom
- The church has always been in the eternal purpose of God
- God did not choose to reveal it to man until after the Jews' rejection of their Messiah
- Thus, the church is a new work of God begun in the NT

### 2. It is proved by the baptism of the Holy Spirit – without Spirit baptism there can be no body of Christ

**Acts 1:5** ~ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now

**Acts 2:4** ~ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

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<sup>2</sup> Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, 40.

**Acts 11:15** ~ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.

- “the beginning” can only refer to Pentecost, thus identifying it as the time of the “baptism of the Holy Spirit”

**1 Corinthians 12:13** ~ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

- The pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost is the means by which the body of Christ was formed
- As believers are placed in the sphere of the Spirit, they are fused into the spiritual body which is identified as the church

### **3. It is proved by the church as a mystery – a truth not formerly revealed, but now revealed**

- The contemporary definition of a “mystery” is “something not understood or beyond understanding; a piece of fiction dealing usually with the solution of a crime”
- But the biblical definition of a “mystery” is “a fresh revelation or something now revealed that was not previously revealed and so previously unknown”
- The church is a mystery in that it was previously unknown in the Old Testament

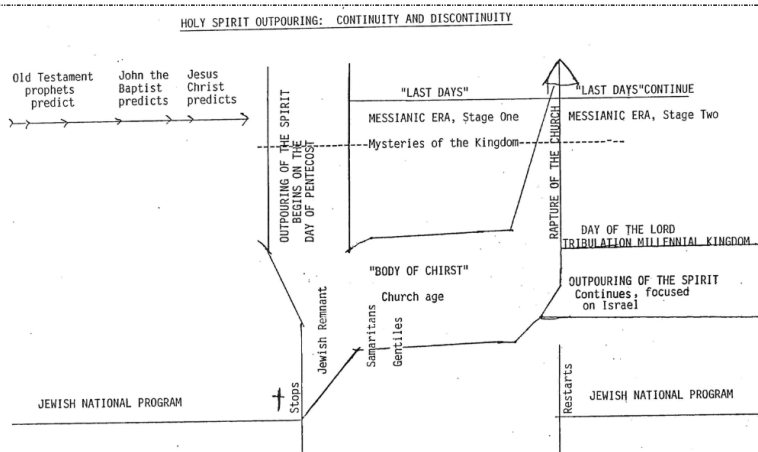
**Colossians 1:25-27** ~ Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

**Ephesians 3:2-6** ~ if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

- Therefore, the church as a union of Jews and Gentiles on equal footing as fellow heirs in Christ is a distinctly New Testament entity
- This union was not foreseen in OT times; it is the mystery of the church age which is a “new man:”

**Ephesians 2:14-16** ~ For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

# Holy Spirit Outpouring



## The Parenthesis of the Church

- The church is a parenthesis between God's two dealings with the nation of Israel
- Romans 11:11-29
- The Jews were broken off and the Gentiles were grafted in
- Later, however, the Jews will be regrafted at the Second Coming of Christ
- Thus, the church is the means by which God is working in this present age, between His working in Israel

## The End of the church age

- The age of the church will be complete at the Rapture of the church

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** ~ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52** ~ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

## DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH

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- The world does not submit to God
  - John 3:19; Rom 6
- Different relationship with God
  - John 7:7; 15:18; James 4:4
- Location, not Identity
  - John 17 (out of the world, into the world)
- Do not love the world...do good in the world
  - 1 John 2:15-17 ~ **For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**
  - Gal 6:10 ~ **So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.** (opportunity to love all people. Cf. Acts 2:42-47)

## DISTINCTION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

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- There are two ideas out there: The Church and Israel are **distinct** OR the church **is the “New Israel”**, meaning that the church has merely assumed the covenant promises made to Israel and all of the blessings are entirely and permanently transferred to the church.
  - *For more on the basics of covenants, please see Wednesday Night Theology*
- The church is a separate entity from Israel and remains distinct from Israel.<sup>3</sup>
  - Israel always means the physical descendants of Jacob.
  - A simple concordance study of the usage of the term Israel will demonstrate this.
  - In all sixty-six occurrences in the New Testament the term refers to Jews.
  - Church = “New Israel”... Not accurate. Israel always means Jewish people
- The term “Israel” is used 73 times in the NT and always refers to ethnic Israel not the church
  - Examples: Matt 8:10; John 1:31; Acts 2:36; Phil 3:5
- Paul retains a distinction between Israel and the church.
  - In warning believers not to offend others, he mentions Jews, Greeks (Gentiles), and the church (1 Cor. 10:32).
  - After the church was established, Israel continued to be recognized as a people distinct from Gentiles and from the church (Acts 3:12; 4:8, 10; 5:21, 31, 35; 21:19).

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 363.

## Recognition of the Primary Differences

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### 1. Different Promises (Earthly vs. Heavenly)

- Ezekiel 36:24 ~ “**For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land**”
- Ephesians 1:3 ~ “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ**”

### 2. Different Seed (Physical vs. Spiritual)

- Romans 9:6 ~ “**For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel**”
- Galatians 3:29 ~ “**And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise**”
- Israel's is a physical heritage and this physical heritage has not gone away. The Jews are one of the few ancient cultures that have maintained their ethnic heritage and kept from being totally amalgamated into other cultures.
- But believers have a spiritual heritage

### 3. Different Births (Sinai vs. Pentecost)

- Exodus 19-20 - Israel became a nation at Sinai
- Acts 2 - The Church began at Pentecost

### 4. Different Nationality (Jewish vs. Heavenly)

- Jeremiah 31:31 ~ “**Behold days are coming,**’ declares the Lord, **‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah’**”
- Philippians 3:20 ~ “**For our citizenship is in heaven...**”
- God chose and developed a relationship with a literal nation...His choosing was not of individual people, but rather of a nation.

### 5. Different Temple (Physical vs. Spiritual)

- I Kings 8:11 ~ “**the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord**”
- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 ~ “**Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?**”
- There was a physical temple in Jerusalem and there will be a future temple rebuilt for the millennium (Ezekiel 40-41) – a literal temple
- But the church is a spiritual temple for Christ (Eph. 2:21)
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### 6. Different Relationship w/ Christ

- I Peter 2:7-8 ~ “**The Stone which the builders rejected... a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense...**”
- Ephesians 2:20 ~ “[God's household] **having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone**”

## Putting it all together

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- What does Scripture describe? - God promised and He will fulfill.
- The bottom line: The church and Israel are distinct (as well as the Kingdom... millennium reign)
- **Israel** is (a) a physical nation, (b) originating in Genesis 12, (c) consisting of ethnic Jews, and (d) including a mixture of believers and unbelievers; whereas the **Church** is (a) a spiritual nation, (b) born in Acts 2, (c) consisting of both Jews and Gentiles in one body, (d) all of whom are Spirit-baptized believers in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Waymeyer, class notes Theology 3, TES.