

## Lesson 2: The History of the Church

The church of Christ began in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following Christ's ascension in heaven. The record of this event is found in Acts 2. This memorable event fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament.

### Introduction

Isaiah 2:2-3, "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 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."

Micah 4:1-2. Micah uses almost identical words to those of Isaiah.

The expressions "house of the Lord" and "house of the God of Jacob" refer to the church. 1 Timothy 3:15, "I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God..."

The events of Acts 2 were also the fulfillment of the Lord's promise in Matthew 6:18, "...upon this rock I will build My church..."

The church of Christ, as it was planned by the Lord, is complete in every way.

1. Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18) and is the chief corner stone of its foundation (Ephesians 2:20).
2. The church is subject to Christ (Ephesians 5:24) and no authority has been given by God to any man, set of men, or ecclesiastical body to change any feature of the church.

### What The Church Was Called

- A. The church was given many designations, each designating ownership or giving some characteristics of its nature.
1. "the church of God" (Acts 20:28)
  2. "Christ's body" (1 Corinthians 12:27)
  3. "the household of God" (1 Timothy 3:15)
  4. "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16)
  5. "the church" (Colossians 1:18)
- B. Members of the church are designated as:
1. "disciples" (Acts 6:1)
  2. "saints" (Romans 1:7)
  3. "brethren" (Philippians 1:14)
  4. "Christians" (Acts 11:26)
  5. "children of God" (Romans 8:16)

# Organization and Government of the Church

## **A. The head of the church is Jesus Christ**

1. He is its head (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22)
2. There is no single man, committee or group of men with the authority to serve as head or leader of the church on earth. The sole head is Jesus Christ.

## **B. Serving under the Savior were the apostles.**

1. The teachings of the apostles, given by inspiration, is the authority of Christ given to the church for all ages.
2. After New Testament days there were no successors to the apostles (Ephesians 4:11-16)

## **C. The only unit of organization is the Lord's church is the local congregation.**

1. In the New Testament days there were no conventions, synods, nor councils to govern Christ's church.
2. Each congregation was an independent organization, and the members of that congregation were under the oversight of a plurality of elders (other names are "bishops," "pastors," "overseers," and "shepherds"). See Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23.
3. A later lesson will discuss the organization in greater detail.
4. In the New Testament church, men who preach the gospel are not correctly called the pastor. The pastor as discussed in #2 above are the elders of the church. There are however, some preachers who even though they are hired as the church preacher also serve in the role of an elder and therefore would be a pastor, in that role alone. Further, religious titles such as "Father," "Reverend," etc.. were not used, and, in fact, were condemned by Jesus (Matthew 23:8-10).

# The Worship of The Church

## **A. A later lesson will discuss the worship of the church more in detail, but at this point we want to say that the worship of the church was remarkably simple.**

1. Every aspect of worship was designed for the purpose of building up the worshiper.
2. Every item of worship demanded thought and meditation and could not be done mechanically.

## **B. Worship consisted of the following;**

1. The Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28); Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25)
2. Prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
3. Singing (Ephesians 5:19)
4. Contribution (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
5. Teaching

# Terms of Admission

## **A. No one ever "joined" the New Testament church, but people were "added" to it by the Lord upon their acceptance of the gospel (Acts 2:41, 47).**

1. The gospel is received by belief (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 10:17)
2. The individual represents of his sin (Luke 13:3; 24:46-47)
3. Christ is confessed as the Son of God (Romans 10:10; Acts 8:36-37)
4. The believing, penitent person is then baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 10:48).

## **B. In New Testament days the act of baptism was immersion in water.**

1. The Greek word meant "immersion."