

# PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE CHURCHES

## A Study of 3 Churches in the Bible ....

### And How the Present Church is DISTINCT From Those of Prophecy

*The word 'church' .... simply means*

*'a collective group of believers in God as the Saviour of mankind*

*who are united in form or creed, and*

*who join together in a particular place (house or building) for worship of God.'*

As we study through the scriptures .... we'll see the word 'church' used often.

This morning, we'll consider the question:

### **Where In the World Is God's Church Today ?**

First, let's consider: **THE 'ONCE' CHURCH**

**ONCE** upon a time .... there was a church. We could call it 'The Once Church.'

It had many charter-members .... who were the children of Israel:

**Exo 12:37** And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.

This church moved after 430 years of slavery. It was a mobile church:

**Exo 12:40-41** Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.

41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

God instituted an annual 'Independence Day' of Israel's deliverance:

**Exo 12:42** It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.

That's when, rather than killing the first-born, the angel of the Lord passed-over the Israelite homes that had painted the blood of the lamb on their door frames:

**Exo 12:43** And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the **passover**: There shall no stranger eat thereof:

The 'rite of passage' into The Once Church .... was circumcision:

**Exo 12:48** And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be **circumcised**, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

Moses was the pastor of the sheep (Psa 95:7, 100:3) of that Church:

**Acts 7:35** This **Moses** whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

That assembly didn't initially have a building program. They camped in the wilderness:

**Acts 7:36-38** He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness **forty years**.

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

38 This is he, that was in **the church in the wilderness** with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

The Once Church could be also called the Old Testament Church

because it had the Old Testament LAW for its creed ....

**Exo 24:12** And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and **a law, and commandments** which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

The Old Testament Church had a sanctuary and a tabernacle:

**Exo 25:8,9** And let them make me **a sanctuary** (a sacred place for the presence and worship of God); that I may dwell among them.

9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of **the tabernacle** (like a mobile temple), and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

Eventually the Church built a stationary house in which to keep the ark of the covenant

**1 Kings 6:1** And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build **the house of the LORD**.

The Lord's House became commonly known as the temple:

**1 Kings 6:17** And the house, that is, **the temple** before it, was forty cubits long.

It was located in Jerusalem:

**Isa 44:28** That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to **Jerusalem**, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Jesus lived under the Old Testament:

**Gal 4:4** But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

Matt 5:17 says Jesus came to fulfil the law. That's what He was doing.

When Jesus lived on earth, He claimed the Lord's house as His Father's:

**John 2:16** And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not **my Father's house** an house of merchandise.

The Old Testament Church was still in existence when Jesus spoke of the church:

**Matt 18:17** And if he (from vs. 15 - thy brother that trespassed against thee) shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Jesus quoted from Isa 56:7, when He recalled the temple as the house of prayer:

**Matt 21:13** And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called **the house of prayer**; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Jesus prophesied that He would build His church:

**Matt 16:15-18** He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?  
 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ('Christ' is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word 'Messiah' - John 1:41; 4:25)  
 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.  
 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and **upon this rock I WILL BUILD my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The 'New Testament' church would be dedicated with the blood of His death:

**Matt 26:28** For **this is my blood of the NEW testament**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Jesus had to die .... before the New Testament could begin:

**Heb 9:15-20** And for this cause **he is the mediator of the new testament**, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.  
 16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.  
 17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.  
 18 Whereupon neither **the first testament (the 'first' one was the 'Old' Testament)** was dedicated without blood.  
 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,  
 20 Saying, **This is the blood of the testament** which God hath enjoined unto you.

Rom 3:25 explains that God was fore-bearing Israel's sins until Christ's blood came:

**Heb 10:4** For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

It was the blood of Jesus Christ .... that paid for all sin .... for all time!

**Many traditional denominations in religion claim that**

**Pentecost was the birthday of the 'New Testament' church.**

**Well, I'd agree with that statement --- but I'd have to clarify it with this one:**

**That's NOT the church we're in today in the dispensation of grace!**

We'll see some of the reasons why .... as we look at the 2nd church:

Peter was preaching to Jewish men who were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast:

**Acts 2:5** And there were **dwelling at Jerusalem JEWS**, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Remember Matt 16:18 where Jesus prophesied that He would build His church on Peter. Peter was the leader .... the head-spokesman .... of the church in Acts 2:

**Acts 2:14** But **Peter**, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

The happenings in the church at Pentecost were prophesied events:

**Acts 2:16** But **this is that which was spoken by the prophet** Joel;

The prophets foretold God would pour His Spirit upon them:

**Joel 2:28,29** And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

**Ezek 36:27** And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Thus, it was the New Testament Church that began at Pentecost.

Let's examine some **COMMON PRACTICES**

**in both the Old and the New Testament churches:**

**Water baptism FOR the remission of sins was still required:**

**Mark 1:4** John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

**Mark 16:16,19** He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

**Acts 2:38** Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

**Keeping the Law was still necessary:**

**Deut 6:25** And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to DO all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

**Matt 19:16,17** And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

**Matt 28:19,20** Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

**Selling All was still the rule:**

**Luke 12:33** Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

**Acts 2:44,45** And all that believed were together, and had all things common;  
45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

They didn't have to worry about their next meal. God would feed them:

**Neh 9:20,21** Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

21 Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.

**Matt 6:11** Give us this day our daily bread.

**Matt 6:31-33** Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

**Physical healing was in program then:**

**Psa 103:2,3** Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

**Luke 4:40** Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

**Acts 5:16** There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

**Think back over the words, phrases, and practices we've read about both the Old and New Testament churches ....**

**Many of them are mis-applied to 'The Present Church' today.**

Now, let's look at a rightly-divided description of **The Present Church:**

The Present Church .... to which WE belong ....

is termed by God as being 'Christ's Body':

**Eph 1:20-23** (speaking of “his mighty power” from verse 19) Which he (**God the Father**) wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to **the church**,

23 **Which is his body**, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

God designed Christ to be the HEAD of The Present Church ....

and we are the BODY:

**Eph 5:23** For the husband is the head of the wife, even as **Christ is the head of the church**: and he is the saviour of the body.

The present church is to obey Christ, its head:

**Eph 5:24** Therefore as **the church is subject unto Christ**, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Christ wants his present church .... to have the witness of a godly life:

**Eph 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, even as **Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it**;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself **a glorious church**, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

God explained the present church’s relationship to Christ as a body to its head:

**Col 1:18** And **he is the head of the body, the church**: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

God .... through Paul’s pen .... used the same analogy again for the Colossian saints:

**Col 1:24** Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for **his body's sake, which is the church**:

**Col 3:15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Believers at Rome had similar information:

**Rom 12:4,5** For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

The Corinthians were taught basically the same principal:

**1 Cor 12:12-14** For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (this is our spiritual baptism .... not water), whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

The **Common Practices** of the Present Church .... are quite different from the others.

We only have one baptism --- and it's not water:

**Eph 4:5** One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

We are not under the law:

**Rom 6:14** For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

We don't get rid of personal possessions --- we work for what we have:

**2 Thess 3:10** For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

**1 Tim 5:8** But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

God isn't healing people today. Our physical bodies get sick:

**2 Cor 4:16** For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

The Present Church .... of the dispensation of grace .... is active during sort-of-like an **Intermission Time** of the New Testament Church.

The Future Church .... is the **continuation of the New Testament church** ....

which began at Pentecost .....

but has been **held in abeyance** .... during the dispensation of grace:

**Heb 12:22-24** But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,  
23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,  
24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

**Miraculous physical healing** will function again in the Future Church:

**James 5:14,15** Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:  
15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

In Rev 2:1,8,12,18 and Rev 3:1,7,14 --

there are 'angels' in charge of the Future Churches.

An angel of the Lord will witness to the Future Churches ....

near the time when Jesus returns to the earth .... to set up His kingdom:

**Rev 22:12-14,16** And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.  
13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.  
14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (that's New Jerusalem, that will come down from God out of heaven - Rev 21:2)  
16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

*This is David Dowell, saying, "Think about it!"*