

Babylonian kingdom. Universally, religious people note the Roman Empire was that fourth earthly kingdom. The establishment of the church in Jerusalem in about 33 A.D. corresponds to the time and place prophesied for the establishment of the kingdom of prophecy. Further, during His earthly ministry, Jesus told some they would not die before the establishment of the kingdom (Mark 9:1). This statement of the Lord corresponds to both the prophecies and the commencement of the church.

Unlike humanly devised churches, the church of the Bible has Christ alone as its Builder (Acts 20:28). Prophecy spoke of a stone cut from a mountain without the hands of men (Daniel 2:45), which stone is the “rock” (confession that Christ is the Son of God) of Matthew 16:16-18 on which Jesus promised to build His church, and the foundation of the church which is Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). Jesus, “a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God...” is “chief corner stone” (1 Peter 2:4-8; Acts 4:11), making Jesus also Head of the church, Head of the body, and King of the kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

To the surprise of the Jews, and to the amazement of countless souls today as well, Jesus Christ did not come to establish an earth-

ly or material kingdom (John 18:36,37). Had Jesus intended to establish an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem, Pilate as Caesar’s governor could not have openly declared of Jesus, “I find in him no fault at all” (John 18:38).

Churches of human origin were begun by mere mortals instead of by the Holy Son of God Himself. They were begun after the establishment of the Lord’s church, most of them outside the era and influence of the Roman Empire and in the wrong cities. Human churches are out of harmony with prophecies about the establishment of the Lord’s church.

The seed for harvesting a bumper crop of Christians and churches of Christ (Romans 16:16) is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). When something else is planted in the hearts of men, a much different crop results. Speaking of these different crops, not the result of the Word of God, Jesus said, “...Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”

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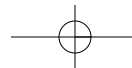
**The New Testament
Church Is Divine
in Origin**

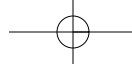
Louis Rushmore

The one church over which Jesus alone is head is divine in origin. Two factors primarily attest to the divine origin of the church, namely: (1) The first conception of the church is attributed by Scripture to the mind of God before creation. (2) The divine hand mandated and established the church by the power and authority of heaven. Especially after a careful examination of these points, the earnest student should experience little difficulty identifying the church of the Bible, in spite of abundant denominational confusion in the religious world.

ORIGIN IN MIND OF GOD

Many people mistakenly believe that the church was an after-thought of God, devised due to the Jews’ rejection of Christ as their Messiah. Not aware that the words church and kingdom are interchangeable terms (Matthew 16:16-19), they also view the church as a substitution for the kingdom. This would defraud God and Christ of both their omniscience and omnipotence.





The apostle Paul explained to the Ephesians the unfolding of God's plan for man's redemption through the church (Ephesians 3:3-12). In verses three through five, he noted that God's plan had formerly been a "mystery."

This mystery provided for the inclusion of the Gentiles (verse 6). Though unnoticed by the Jews and men in general, several prophecies acknowledge that both Jews and Gentiles together were always intended to be the beneficiaries of God's plan (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; Isaiah 62:2; Joel 3:1-2; Luke 2:25-32).

The explanation of God's plan, first called a mystery, here said to be the Gospel, is charged to the church. Furthermore, the church is attributed to the "eternal purpose" (Ephesians 3:9-11) or mind of God. Titus 1:1-3 and 1 Peter 1:18-20 also address God's eternal plan for the redemption of man.

The church was God's idea, not man's idea. God planned to build the church from before the creation of the world and man. God determined Christ should be the Head and Savior of the church (Ephesians 5:23). It was always God's plan to redeem fallen man through the church. Hence, the saved are added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). The Lord's church is, therefore, the body of the saved.

ESTABLISHED BY GOD

Not only did God establish the church in His mind, but He chose a time suitable to Himself to establish that divine institution on earth. Fundamental to comprehending the transfer of the church from the mind of God to its establishment on earth, are: (1) The church and kingdom are synonymous terms for the same divine institution. (2) Therefore, all prophecies about the establishment of the kingdom equally pertain to the church, and (3) The kingdom (church) of prophecy is spiritual, not material in nature.

Jesus promised "the keys of the kingdom" to Peter, which keys (authority to bind and loose, Matthew 16:19) he used in the first recorded Gospel sermon (Acts 2). Acts Two chronicles the birthday of the church. From that point forward, all reference to the church is a present entity, not yet future. Since Peter used the keys of the kingdom essentially to unlock the church, the church and the kingdom are the same institution.

Additionally, the apostles made no distinction between the church and the kingdom. Paul called Christians in Corinth "saints," comprising "the church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2), whereas he addressed Christians in Colosse as

"saints," members of "the kingdom" (Colossians 1:2, 13). The apostle John also matter-of-factly stated he was a member of the kingdom (Revelation 1:9). All these were unquestionably members of the New Testament church, yet they were members of the kingdom, too. They were members of "one body" (Ephesians 4:4), variously called "the church" (Ephesians 1:22, 23), "the temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16), "the house of God" (1 Timothy 3:15) and "the kingdom" (Colossians 1:13). Each different designation merely employs another descriptive term for the same divine institution.

The establishment of the church or kingdom in complete fulfillment of numerous prophecies is remarkable testimony of the establishment of the church by God. Churches since Acts Two that were begun by men were not established according to prophecies of the church. God caused the first church to be built and established the only church corresponding to age-old prophecies.

Isaiah 2:1-5; Joel 2:28-3:2 and Micah 4:1-3 identify the city of Jerusalem as the place of the establishment of the kingdom or "house of the Lord." Daniel 2:31-45 teaches the Lord's kingdom was to be established during the days of the fourth world kingdom from and including the

