

A Church with Purpose

Lesson 1- The Origin of the Church

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this study of the purpose of the church. Over the next six lessons, we will be examining God's plan and purpose for the church and discuss the following topics: The Origin of the Church, Christ's Legacy on Earth, Pictures of the Church, Examples from the New Testament Church, Christ's Commands to Us, and Principles for Church Growth.

This study is vitally important to anyone who wants to be a part of a vibrant, growing church. By examining the scripture, we will find out what God is calling us to be, do, and live for as the church of Jesus Christ. Today, we will discuss the origin of the church.

BIBLE STUDY

In the book of Acts, we read about the formation of the church. Of course, for many centuries before Christ, faithful followers of God would meet together in the synagogues to worship him and study the law. But the official New Testament church began in the book of Acts with a command of Jesus. Read Acts 1:4 & 8. What did Jesus promise and why would it be given? _____

Jesus commanded that the believers wait together and seek the promise of the Father. The church was established so that believers could corporately seek God and receive empowerment from Him and be witnesses to the world. The church was not just an afterthought of Jesus' time on earth, mind you. It was part of His design from the beginning. Even in the Old Testament, David spoke of the assembly of believers. Read Psalm 35:18. According to this scripture, what is the purpose of the church (or assembly)? _____

Jesus spoke of the church he would establish during his ministry on earth. One famous moment when Jesus spoke prophetically of the church was when Peter made his confession that Jesus is the Christ. Read Matthew 16:13-19. What is the importance of Peter's epiphany for the church? _____

First, notice the rock on which Christ will build His church. Some have mistakenly assumed that this rock is Peter, since that was the meaning of his name. Actually, Peter's name (petros) refers more to a stone or pebble, while the word for rock here (petra) could better be translated boulder or cliff face. In other words, Peter isn't the foundation, but a

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stone in the cliff face. The foundation of the church was his confession that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Notice also that the church is promised victory over the enemy: “the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” There is victory where Christian brothers and sisters dwell in unity as a body. We are also given corporate spiritual authority to bind and loose spiritual forces on heaven and earth. We are given the authority as a body to bring freedom to the captive, restoration to the crushed, and healing to the sick.

Let’s turn back to the book of Acts. We started by talking about Jesus’ command to wait for the promise of the Father. Read Acts 2:1-4 How was the promise of God fulfilled, and under what conditions was it fulfilled? _____

God makes his presence known when we come together. Read Matthew 18:20. How do we benefit when we come together as believers? _____

Read Leviticus 26:8. How does joining together and combining our faith benefit us in spiritual warfare? _____

As a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, a vibrant, growing church- the first church- was established. In Acts 2:42-47, we read about the fellowship of believers that was established as a result of God’s promise and the faithfulness of the believers. What do you notice about the first century church in this passage that we can apply to the church today? _____

As we have taken a brief look at the origin of the church, we have seen many spiritual truths about what to church is called to be. The church is not a human institution, but a divinely ordained body of believers, established by Christ to touch the world with his love.

CONCLUSION

We must put into practice what we have learned if we wish to be effective as a church. But the church is the people, and the people must be ready, available, present, and involved to make the church effective. Read Hebrews 10:25. Be a part, be active, be involved, attend services, encourage one another, and help make the church everything God has called it to be.