

Christian Education

Church 101: Church Beginnings



A Discipleship Ministry of East Side Baptist Church¹

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Church Beginnings: The start of the church. The church has roots and a foundation that are critical to the health of the church today and the church of tomorrow. Together, they point to the great need for the church in society and the great need people have for the church.

We are blessed with an introductory statement about the church that serves as our starting place. Find the following passage and fill-in the blanks:

Matthew 16:13-19, HCSB²: *When _____ came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His _____, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say _____ the _____; others, _____; still others, Jeremiah or one of the _____.” “But you,” He asked them, “who do you say that I am?” Simon _____ answered, “You are the _____, the Son of the living God!”*

And Jesus responded, “Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this _____ I will _____ My _____, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven.”

Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the living God. And Jesus is the Founder and Builder of the church. He called the church “*My church.*” This truth is so very important. The church belongs to Jesus. The people associated with the week to week activities of the church, must understand the church does not belong to

them. Also, people who have walked away from the church must come to terms with the fact they have walked away from the very institution which Jesus established to be a significant part of life and society. If the local church is not what Jesus intended, one should not abandon the church, but help the church return to her roots and foundation. When the church is what Jesus intended, people at large will have the opportunity to come to know Him.

At a point when many people were walking away from Jesus, Jesus asked the twelve disciples, *“You don’t want to go away too, do you?”* Simon Peter answered, *“Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God!”* (John 6:67-69, HCSB). There was a place they could have gone: the synagogue. In the Jewish synagogues and in the Temple were teachers and leaders called Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes. But for the most part, these leaders were rejecting the idea that Jesus is the One whom the prophets of old had proclaimed would one day come unto Israel as the Anointed Messiah. That is why Simon Peter said they have no where else to turn. Only Jesus is speaking the words of eternal life!

Talking with the Jewish religious leaders, *Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: **The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This came from the Lord and is wonderful in our eyes?** Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing its fruit”* (Matthew 21: 42-43, HCSB). Because the Jewish religious leaders were failing in God’s plan, Jesus said the message of the kingdom of God would be proclaimed by another. Jesus was about to establish *His church*.

Peter also had the opportunity to address the Jewish religious leaders after he had been arrested for teaching that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead and was the One responsible for healing a lame man. Complete the following:

Acts 4:8-12, HCSB: *Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man--by what means he was healed--let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the _____ of _____ the Nazarene--whom you _____ and whom God _____ from the dead--by Him this man is standing here before you healthy. This [Jesus] is **The _____ despised by you builders, who has become the cornerstone.** There is _____ in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."*

Using the same reference to Jesus being the cornerstone, Peter would later write regarding those who come unto Jesus for salvation from sin, death, and the judgment to come:

*But you are **a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.** Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10, HCSB).*

The church is called a chosen race of people, a holy nation, and a people for God's own possession. The church is not a new racial group, but a group, unlike any other, that have faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God! As a holy nation, the church is the people of God. The church is not replacing the unique place of the nation of Israel. Scripture teaches God is not finished with the people of Israel. However, unless the Jew has faith in Jesus, the Jew is not part of the church, and thus, is coming short of the salvation offered by God through

Jesus. This is true for the Gentile as well. Unless the Gentile has faith in Jesus, the Gentile also falls short of the salvation of God through faith in His Son (Romans 1:16-17; 2:9-11).

Peter made an important statement regarding the church when he wrote, **...so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light** (1 Peter 2:9, HCSB). The church has been called out of darkness and into the light. Those who come to know Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, are called out of darkness and into His marvelous light. This is directly related to what Jesus said when He told His disciples that He would build *His church*.

The Greek word translated as *church* is *ekklesia*. A literal translation of the word from Greek to English is *an assembly, a (religious) congregation*³. The word was used in the Greek culture to describe the assembling of people for a particular purpose. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint, the word was often used to describe the assembling of the people of Israel, especially for religious reasons. Thus, Jesus literally said He would build His assembly or His congregation. He is gathering together those who are His followers like a shepherd gathers his sheep.



One more important note is needed about the word *ekklesia*. This word is made from two Greek words, *ek* (meaning from out of) and *kaleo* (meaning to call). Putting these meanings together, the assembly is *from out of called*, or *the called out ones*. Peter wrote that Jesus *called you out of darkness into His marvelous light* (1 Peter 2:9, HCSB). Jesus is calling people out of a world of sin and into the kingdom of righteousness! *The church is the called out ones!*

So where does the word *church* come from? The etymology⁴ of the word is rooted in the Middle English form of *chirche* or *kirke*. The Scottish form is *kirk*. These words come from the Greek word *kyriake*, which includes a form of the word *oikia*, meaning Lord's house. This comes from *kyriakos*, meaning belonging to the Lord. The word *kyrios*, usually *kurios*, means Lord. Our English spelling comes from the Middle English *chirche*. Today the word *church* means a building set apart or consecrated for public worship, especially Christian. The word also identifies an assembled group of worshippers, or a congregation.

Check the box after reading ACTS 2:1-12.

What day was this? _____

What did the sound they heard sound like? _____

Tongues like what appeared to rest on the disciples? _____

What were the disciples filled with? _____

The disciples were empowered to speak different what? _____

Pentecost was celebrated 50 days after Passover. Jesus was crucified at Passover and arose on the third day. He appeared to the disciples over a 40 day period of time. One week after the ascension of Jesus into Heaven came Pentecost. This is significant because right before Jesus ascended He told His disciples:

And look, I am sending you what My Father promised. As for you, stay in the city until you are empowered from on high (Luke 24:49, HCSB).

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8, HCSB).



The Holy Spirit came with the sound like a violent rushing wind. The disciples were filled with, or indwelt by, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in the native languages of the people who came to investigate the mighty sound. They were amazed as they heard testimony about the mighty acts of God.

Check the box after reading ACTS 2:13-21.

While many of the people who came to see what was going on were hearing the disciples speak in their native languages, others misunderstood what was going on and believed the men to be drunk. Who rose up to speak to this?

This is the very one who said to Jesus, *“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!”* And Jesus responded, *“Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:16-19, HCSB).

Peter was filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit put in his mind and his mouth the words the prophet Joel was inspired to share several hundred years earlier. Peter explained the coming of the Holy Spirit of God as fulfillment of prophecy. Complete the last line of this prophecy:

***then whoever _____ on the name of the _____ will be
_____ (Acts 2:21, HCSB).***

Check the box after reading ACTS 2:22-32.

Listen to these words (Acts 2:22, HCSB), Peter said. Indeed, what he is saying is significant. God revealed Jesus the Messiah with miracles, wonders, and _____. Jesus was delivered up according to the predetermined plan of God. Lawless people, Gentiles without the Law of Moses, were the ones the Jews used to nail Jesus to a cross and kill Him. They had demanded Jesus be crucified. But the Good News of the Gospel includes an amazing truth: God raised Jesus up from death. Death is not more powerful than God. God rules over death. The resurrected Jesus was seen by many, including Peter and his fellow disciples who are now all filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote that Jesus appeared to more than 500 people on one occasion (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-8)



Check the box after reading ACTS 2:33-36.

Have you or someone you know ever accused a preacher of being too direct? Peter was very direct. In verse 36 He refers to *Jesus, whom you crucified*. He already said they *used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him* (Acts 2:23, HCSB). Also in this passage Peter states Jesus is at which hand of God the Father? _____. And he reiterates that God sent the Holy Spirit at the request of Jesus. The coming of the Holy Spirit is sparking the beginning of the church.

Check the box after reading ACTS 2:37.

This is conviction. The people who gathered to see what the great noise was, heard the disciples of Jesus speaking in their native languages and heard Peter

They speak the truth about Jesus, are now under conviction. They were pierced right to their what? _____. What this means is their conviction was deep. Conviction went to the core of their being. They knew they were guilty of conspiring against Jesus and opposing God. And so, they asked what they can do to make things right.

Check the box after reading ACTS 2:38-41.

What is the key word and action needed to make things right? _____

Baptism comes after a person repents. The Greek word, *metanoeo*, translated “repent” literally means to change one’s mind or purpose. The way to make things right is to believe what is right about Jesus. Those listening to Peter, and we the writers and you the readers, are to believe that God has made this Jesus both *Lord and Messiah* (Acts 2:36). To the Jew, this means Jesus is the Promised One, the One they were waiting for, their Deliverer. Jesus came to deliver them, not from the Roman Empire, but from their own sin. This sin is revealed in the way they rejected Jesus. They lived in opposition to God’s plan and purpose for Jesus and for their lives. To repent is to welcome Jesus into their lives and follow Him. To the Gentile, Jesus is the Lord of lords and King of kings. The Gospel Good News is that Jesus ultimately came to save both Jews and Gentiles from personal sin and life without God (Isaiah 42:1-9; Romans 1:16-17; 2:9-11).

Repentance has a requirement and benefits. First, the requirement: be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 28:18-20). Baptism is a public declaration of faith. Baptism identifies with the death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 10:9-10). In Romans 6:3-11, Paul explains the connection to Jesus for us as being dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus. This means living a



new way of life, no longer living without Jesus or in opposition to Him, but living with Jesus and following His words and ways.

The benefits of repentance and baptism include forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word, *aphesis*, translated forgiveness means dismissal or release. Forgiveness means the charges against you have been dropped. You have been released. You do not have to pay the eternal penalty. Jesus died for you! The gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of God's Presence in your life. This is the assurance of eternal salvation. Paul wrote, *The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children* (Romans 8:16, HCSB). The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer involves this and so much more. This is the topic for another study in the Christian Education ministry.

An additional benefit to repentance and baptism is the opportunity that comes to your family. Peter said *the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off* (Acts 2:39, HCSB). When you trust in Jesus, others will have the opportunity to do so also. This means family, friends, co-workers, classmates, neighbors, and acquaintances. They will see the positive change in you and hear your story, your testimony, how Jesus saved you. Then they will have the opportunity to change their mind about Jesus.

Peter said, *"Be saved from this corrupt generation!"* (Acts 2:40, HCSB). This statement applies to our modern day as well. To be saved means to be rescued, preserved from harm, kept safe. There are and will be serious consequences for sins. Peter did not address all this. He knew people understood. The Good News is that there is a way of escape: faith in Jesus who overcame the sin of man and the penalty of sin, death or eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). He is alive and able to deliver you from sin and death. On the day of Pentecost, how many people placed their faith in Jesus? _____

Have you placed your faith and your future in Jesus? If not, take a moment and consider changing your mind about Jesus right now. If you already have, write below the events surrounding that decision and how you knew Jesus saved you:

Check the box after reading ACTS 2:42.

These new Christians devoted themselves to what four things?

(1) _____ (2) _____
(3) _____ (4) _____



Being associated with other believers, other Christians, is important. Time spent together means less time available for worldly ways, sinful ways. Every time they were together they represented the church and honored the Founder of the church, their Lord, Jesus.

Check the box after reading ACTS 2:43-47.

These verses reiterate what the previous verse stated and tell us what else was happening. The fear they experienced was an awe and reverence for God because of the signs and wonders. These unidentified signs and wonders gave confirmation and affirmation that the church age had begun! God has chosen to work in and through the church to reach out to a sinful and corrupt generation.

These new believers were not selfish. Where there was need among them, those who had the means sold possessions to help those in need. Their bond of togetherness was seen daily as they entered the Temple to worship and praise God together. They also shared meals with each other regularly. *And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved (Acts 2:47, HCSB).*

So the church was established by Jesus. This occurred around the year 30 A.D. That means the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus has been spreading ever since. Today, the Gospel has been proclaimed to almost every people group in the world. Many have repented and believed in the Lord Jesus. You can too! Bow in prayer and with faith, ask Jesus to show you the way. Tell a friend about your decision to follow Jesus and on Sunday, share that with a pastor.

Do not join the ranks of those who do not think spending time with other believers in corporate worship is worthwhile. Some get caught up in worldly affairs and drift away from the church family. Others get mad and stop associating with the church. No doubt, the church in the world is not perfect. But the church is the means through which Jesus is working in the world today. Rather than disassociating with the church, believers should be seeking the Lord all the more so that the weaknesses of mankind will be replaced with the power of the Holy Spirit (John 13:34-35; Acts 4:23-33).

Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:23-25, HCSB).

To complete this study, read the following passages and then check the boxes:

Matthew 5 - 6 - 7

Ephesians 4 - 5

Colossians 1:1-23



Come and worship with us this Sunday!

Foot Notes

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³ *Greek Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*. Updated Edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998.

⁴ All English word definitions and etymologies in this work come from *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. Fourth Edition. Cleveland, Ohio: Wiley Publishing, 2004.

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