

Why Be A Member Of The Church Of Christ?

Because It Was Divinely Planned Ephesians 3:1-12

Spring 2012 Gospel Meeting

Acts 2 - The Scene

Day of Pentecost.
Perhaps **more Jews in the city on this day than any other day of the year...**

50 days earlier...
3 days later, an empty tomb.
Jesus presented Himself alive
Instructions to the apostles.
The outpouring of the Holy Spirit

The Scene

Day of Pentecost.

What does this mean?

The inspired apostle Peter speaks...

Acts 2:22-24

“Jesus the Nazarene,

- *Attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know —*

Acts 2:22-24

“Jesus the Nazarene,

- *Delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God,*

Acts 2:22-24

“Jesus the Nazarene,

- *You nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

Acts 2:22-24

“Jesus the Nazarene,

- **God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.”**

Acts 2:25-35

Through the prophetic word, Peter proved that Jesus was He whom the scriptures spoke of who was now at the right hand of God having arisen from the dead.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Acts 2:36

Acts 2:37

Pierced to the heart they asked...

“Brethren what shall we do?”

“Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins”

(“for” eis, towards or unto)

The result?

They were added. (2:41)

Added to what?

- The body of the saved.
- To the church.
- To the foundation which Jesus Christ had laid. 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Peter 2:4-6

“The Lord added to the church daily”
(KJV) (2:47)

What does it mean to be **“added”**?

Greek word ‘prostithemi’ means “to add, or to place beside” (Vine’s)

It’s where we get our English word ‘prosthesis’ or ‘prosthetics’

Rather appropriate – man is added to the body of Christ. 1 Cor. 12:12-27

Whose church were they added to? God's!

IT'S NOT
MY CHURCH,
YOUR CHURCH
OR
OUR CHURCH,
IT BELONGS TO GOD!

It's a church that God planned,
designed & established.

That's the church I want to be a
member of!

When did God plan it and
design it?

Was the church simply a
temporary, stop-gap measure
because God's original plan for
an earthly kingdom failed?

Note the following statements:

"Because the nation has rejected
Him, the Lord ... (withdraws) the
offer of the kingdom..., and
announces the inception of an
entirely new, unheralded and
unexpected program – the
church".

Things To Come, Pentecost, p. 463f (via Miller, p. 43f).

"...the present age is a parenthesis
or a time period not predicted by
the Old Testament and therefore
not fulfilling or advancing the
program of events revealed in the
Old Testament foreview ... "

The Millennial Kingdom, Walvoord, p. 231 (via Miller, p. 46, and via McGuiggan & Jordan, slide #161).

“Jesus first taught ‘the Old Testament hope of the Messianic kingdom.’ But Israel began to oppose Jesus, so He ‘began to announce an entirely new and different aspect which His kingdom was to assume’ which he calls ‘the present, spiritual, veiled, suffering form of the kingdom of heaven’”

Kingdom of God, Boll, p. 46 (via Wallace, p. 163).

If that be the case,

- Then why did Jesus resist and oppose their efforts to make Him a fleshly king? (John 6:14-15)
- Then why did Jesus continually emphasize that “**My kingdom is not of this world**”? (John 18:36)
- If God failed once, could He not fail again? If God failed once, we must ask, how strong is my hope?

What does God’s word say about His plans and design for the church?

The Epistle to the Ephesians –

The place of the church in the scheme of redemption

“**Before the foundation of the world**” (1:4) God determined to put “**every spiritual blessing... in Christ**” – 1:3-7.

But later in the first chapter, Paul makes the point that **the church is the fullness of Christ** (1:22-23).

The church is the place of reconciliation (2:15-16) like those who were reconciled on the day of Pentecost.

The church is the kingdom and those who are added to the church become **“citizens”** of it.

The Church is God’s household – **“being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit”**. (2:19-22)

Again, When did God plan/design the church as a part of His plan to redeem man?

Ephesians chapter 3 –

Paul speaks of a time when **“the mystery of Christ”** was just that – a mystery. (3:5)

Unknown in specifics, details and clarity – in contrast with the clarity that had now come through the revelation that God had given to Paul.

What about the OT prophets?

Peter addressed this point in **1 Peter 1:10-12**

The prophets sought to know the details of what their prophecies were **“indicating”**

Even the angels in heaven did not understand in clarity & specificity God’s plan to redeem man & **“longed to look”** at the completed picture that Peter could now preach and proclaim.

The picture now clear – the details now revealed – the plan unfolded –

Paul now had the blessing and responsibility to preach this gospel of the **“unfathomable riches of Christ”**, and to **“bring to light”** this mystery **“which for ages has been hidden in God”**. (3:7-9)

“which for ages” – lit. from the ages. **“an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity”** (Thayer's Greek Lexicon). 3:21 **“forever and ever”**.

“hidden” – concealed or kept secret.

The purpose of the preaching of the gospel...

so that the **“manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church”**. (3:10)

“through the church” – lit. **“by means of the church”**

While it’s true that the church through its’ evangelistic efforts is to make known the wisdom of God to the world,

that isn’t the point here.

Who is this wisdom to be made known to?

“to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” –

Spiritual beings – including angels. Those referred to in Col. 1:16 and the **“ministering spirits”** referred to in Heb. 1:14.

Will we also?

Remember 1 Pet. 1:12 – angels longed to look into God’s grand scheme of redemption to fully understand and appreciate God’s work.

Do we appreciate the ability to finally and completely see the full beauty of what God had planned in the church?

Again, when did God plan the church?
“In accordance with His eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

The church has always been an essential part of God’s plan.

Can we appreciate how long before God made His plans and His careful, deliberate and meticulous execution of His plan?

From creation, God was developing His plan – prophesying of His plan – foretelling of His plan – waiting (in human terms) to bring it to fruition **“in the fullness of time”** (Gal. 4:4).

We are to be in awe of His forethought, His plans and His execution of His plan.

We're impressed by those who plan things for a long time.

i.e.,

- Revolutionary History
- Grandfather's lesson

How much more that God planned the church before He spoke the world into existence ?

God made sure throughout the time prior to Christ and the inception of the church to reveal elements of His design and plan through His prophets.

Do we see God's plan for the church in prophecy?

Genesis 3:15 –
God's first indication of victory over Satan and the condemnation of sin.

Gen. 12:1-3 –
God's promise to Abraham that through his seed that all the nations of the earth would be spiritually blessed.

Gal. 3:16, 26-29; Acts 3:24-26

2 Sam. 7:12-16 –
God's promise to establish David's descendant on his throne forever. His house and His kingdom will endure forever.

Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:29-33

Jer. 31:31-34 –
God's promise of a new covenant and
a new law which would provide for
forgiveness rather than condemnation

Daniel 2:44-45 –
The promise of a kingdom which will
never be destroyed.

Isaiah 2:2-3

The house of the Lord to be
established. This is the church.
1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5

To take place in "the last days" – Peter
said in Acts 2:16-17 "***this is that***" which
Joel spoke of happening in "***the last
days***".
Heb. 1:1-2.

Isaiah 2:2-3

All nations to flow unto it.
Acts 2:5; Eph. 2:11ff.

Out of Zion will go for the law and
the word from Jerusalem.
Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-5, 8

Building your dream house...

Who will design it?

(1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 8:5)

Building your dream house...

Who will build it?

(Matt. 16:18-19) "I will build MY
church"

Building your dream house...

Who will build it?

The kingdom and the church are interchangeable terms...

I will build a house and give you the keys to my car. Doesn't work.

I will build a house and give you the keys to the front door. Works.

Building your dream house...

How will it be paid for it?

Acts 20:28 – purchased w/ the blood of Christ.

1 Pet. 1:17-20

Building God's house...

In God's eternal purpose, He designed it, our Lord Jesus Christ built it and paid for it with His life.

His grace has offered us the chance to be a part of it, to be added to it.

What are we responsible for?

God's plan included our role in the church.

Ephesians 4:11-16.

Ephesians 4:11-16.

● We're to work. (vs. 12)

Ephesians 4:11-16.

● We're to serve. (vs. 12)

Ephesians 4:11-16.

- We're to build up the church. (vs. 12)

Ephesians 4:11-16.

- We're to grow up and mature. (vs. 13-15)

Ephesians 4:11-16.

- We're to do our part. (vs. 16)

Our part includes joining ourselves to a local assembly of the Lord's church to work and worship with them.

Acts 9:26 – Paul tried to **“join”** himself to the disciples in Jerusalem.

Join – “kollao” – , "To **glue or cement together... to unite, to join firmly...**"
(Expository Dictionary of NT Words, by W. E. Vine).

A word used to describe the permanency of marriage. Matt. 19:9

We have such a responsibility to “join” a local congregation of the Lord's people.

A few questions
for us to
consider...

First and foremost, have you obeyed the gospel so that God will add you to His church?

If you have...

Is the Lord's church a priority in my life? Do I put the Lord's church first? Would others know? Matt. 6:33

How do I seek to contribute to the divinely planned church and how consistent is my devotion to the church?

How often do I thank God for His eternal plan that He carried out in the church?

How often do I thank the Lord Jesus Christ for the price He paid for the church?

What will your answer be?