

# THE ORIGINAL CHURCH

Mt.16:13-19

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. My assignment this week is to discuss the theme “Bringing Back The Original.”
2. And my assignment for the first lesson in the series of lessons on this theme is “The Original Church.”
3. Therefore, the burden of this first lesson will be to seek to identify and to establish from the Scriptures what the original church was and is.
4. Of necessity, the original church would have to be the church we can read about and find identified in the Bible, the N.T. Scriptures, our present and only rule of faith and practice.

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. “Original”
  - a. Webster’s Unabridged Dict.
    - (1) “Pertaining or belonging to the origin or early state of something.
    - (2) “Produced by an author; not copied; as the original text of.
    - (3) “Having to do with origin, initial, first, beginning; that which was at the beginning; not something established later or came into existence later or afterwards.
    - (4) Adjective: “existing from the beginning”; “serving as a pattern.”
    - (5) Noun: “An original model, pattern.”
2. “Church”
  - a. Our English word church is translated from the Gr. term **Ekklesia**, meaning “called out,” and referring to the Lord’s church, as in Mt.16:18.
  - b. Note here that he said he **would build** or establish his church – future tense.
    - (1) Thus, some time after the time of the statement of Mt.16:18 he would build or establish his church.
    - (2) Note also the singular possessive – he would build or establish **ONE**, and it would be **HIS**.

- c. This, of course, would have to be the original which we are seeking to identify.
3. From this basis we start our scriptural search for and scriptural proof that there was and is an original church, what it is, to whom it belongs, how and when it was established, and if it still exists today.

**B. FROM THE SCRIPTURES WE KNOW JESUS HAS A CHURCH, WHICH BELONGS TO HIM AND NO ONE ELSE, WHICH IS ALSO THE ORIGINAL CHURCH. We know this:**

1. Because he, himself, promised to build his church, Mt.16:13-19; Cf. Psa.127:1; Zech.6:12,13.
  - a. The Lord is not slack concerning any promise he has ever made. 2Pet.3:9 is a case in point.
2. Because he purchased his church with his own blood by means of his own physical death, Ac.20:28; Eph.5:25; 1:Pet.1:18,19.
3. Because he is head of his church, Eph.1:22,23; 5:23; Col.1:18.
4. Because he is the Savior of his church, Eph.5:23-27.
5. Because he is the Son over his own house, which is his church, Heb.3:6; Cf. 1Tim.3:14,15.
6. Because his church existed in N.T. times from Pentecost and wore his name, Ac.2:36-41,47; Rom.16:16; Ac.5:11; 11:22,26; 9:31; 18:22; 20:17,28; Gal.2:22.

**C. MOREOVER, FROM THE N.T. SCRIPTURES WE KNOW HE HAS ONLY ONE CHURCH BELONGING TO HIM. We know this:**

1. Because he promised to build only one church belonging to him, Mt.16:16-19 (Note “church” and “kingdom” here used interchangeably)
2. Because he purchased only one church with his blood, Ac.20:28; Eph.5:23-25; 1Cor.6:19,20; 1Pet.1:18,19.
3. Because he is the head of only one church, Eph.1:22,23; 5:23; Col.1:18.
4. Because he is the savior of only one church, which is his spiritual body, Eph.5:23-27.
5. Because there is only one spiritual body, which is his church, Eph.4:4-6; 1:22,23; Col.1:18,24.

**D. FROM THE SCRIPTURES WE LEARN WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW THIS ORIGINAL CHURCH BELONGING TO CHRIST WAS**

**ESTABLISHED, OR WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW IT HAD ITS BEGINNING.**

1. **Where**, or its place of beginning, Isa.2:2,3; Mal.4:1,2; Lk.24:44-49.
  - a. “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, Isa.2:3; Mal.4:2.
  - b. “Beginning at Jerusalem,” Lk.24:47.
  - c. One started or established at any other place is not the original!
2. **When**, or its time of beginning, Isa.2:2,3; Mic.4:1,2; Dan.2:44; Mk.9:1; Ac.1:1-8; 2:1-4; 11:15.
  - a. “In the last days,” Isa.2:2; Mic.4:1.
  - b. “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up his kingdom, which shall **NEVER** be destroyed,” (Dan.2:44), which is the days of the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan.2:40-44), which both the Bible and secular history identify as the Roman Empire.
  - c. This kingdom of God was to **come with power** during the lifetime of those contemporary with Jesus, Mk.9:1.
  - d. His chosen and sent apostles, his ambassadors on earth after his ascension to heaven, were to receive **power after the Holy Spirit is come upon them**, Ac.1:8. Cf. Lk.24:44-49.
  - e. The power of the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, Ac.2:1-4.
  - f. Pentecost, when the power came, is identified as “**the beginning**”, Ac.11:15.
  - g. It was the beginning:
    - (1) Of their preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, of their being witnesses unto Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, whom God hath made both Lord and Christ, Ac.2:14-36.
    - (2) Of believers being told what to do to be saved, Ac.2:21,37-41.
    - (3) Of the Lord adding to the church daily such as should be saved, Ac.2:47. (Which is the only way to become a member of his church. Cf. 1Cor.12:13; 1Pet.3:21)
    - (4) Thus the beginning of the church, the original church, the one he promised to build, the one belonging to him, the one bearing his name, Rom.16:16.

3. This is where, when and how the original church came into existence, and it was singular, possessive: **ONE** belonging to him, his one and only; the original.

**E. NOW NOTE HOW THE N.T. SCRIPTURES IDENTIFY THIS ORIGINAL CHURCH BELONGING TO JESUS CHRIST BY NAME OR BY SCRIPTURAL DESIGNATION.**

1. Collectively, the scriptures identify it as: The church; the kingdom; church of God; church of Christ; body of Christ; the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.
2. Individually, its members are identified as: Disciples; brethren; saints; Christians; children of God.

**F. SOME OBJECT TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE CHURCH BELONGING TO THE LORD BY CLAIMING THAT THE WORD CHURCH IS USED IN THE PLURAL IN THE N.T. WHICH, ACCORDING TO THEM, PROVES THERE IS MORE THAN ONE CHURCH.**

1. Their claim, however, that its plural use in such passages as Ac.9:31; Rom.16:16; Gal.1:22; Rev.1:4 refers to churches of different faiths and orders belonging to the Lord known as the different churches of denominationalism is without scriptural basis.
2. The following is proof that these were all local churches of Christ in different localities or different cities and were all of the same faith and order, not different denominations with different doctrines, names, organizations, creeds, etc.
  - a. They are called “churches of Christ,” Rom.16:16.
    - (1) If a plurality of them are called “churches of Christ” or churches belonging to Christ, what would one of them be called?
  - b. The fact that the same thing was preached to all of these churches proves they were all of the same faith and order, 1Cor.4:15-17; 11:1; Cf. Mk.16:15,16; Gal.1:6-12.
  - c. That fact that one man could and did give orders to all these churches proves they were of the same faith and order, 1Cor.16:1-3; 2Cor.9:1-7; 2Cor.8:11,12.
    - (1) There is no way that can be done in Denominationalism!

- d. The fact that the scriptures demand oneness of mind and judgment with no sectarian division among the children of God proves the N.T. churches were all of the same faith and order, 1Cor.1:10-12; Phil.1:27; Eph.4:1-6.
3. Denominationalism made up of a plurality of churches in each Denomination, with each Denomination differing from the other in name, doctrine, organization and religious practice, was unknown for several generations after the original church was established; they are of men, not of Christ; they are unknown to the Scriptures, except to be condemned in principle as human innovations teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Cf. Mt.15:9; Col.2:20-22.

**G. THE N.T. SCRIPTURES ALSO IDENTIFY THESE LOCAL CHURCHES OF CHRIST, ALL OF WHICH WERE OF THE SAME FAITH AND ORDER, AS TO THEIR ORGANIZATION.**

1. When qualified men were available, each local church was to appoint a plurality of men as elders or bishops or pastors as overseers, with their oversight limited to the local church where they were elders, Ac.14:21-23; Tit.1:5;; Ac.15:1-5,22; 20:17,28; Phil.1:1; 1Tim.3:1-7; Tit.1:5-11; 1Pet.5:1-4.
2. When qualified men were available, each local church was to appoint deacons to serve under the elders, bishops or pastors of each local church, 1Tim.3:8-13; Ac.6:1-6.
3. Thus there was a simple, scriptural organizational setup for each local church: a plurality of bishops or elders or pastors, deacons and saints, Phil.1:1.
4. There was no earthly organization of the local churches, no centralization or a federation of local churches, or conventions, no centralization of oversight, resources, work, or function of any kind.
5. Each local church was autonomous –self-governing under its head, the Lord Jesus Christ, as guided by the written word of the Lord revealed by the Spirit-filled, Spirit-guided apostles of Jesus Christ, who are his ambassadors, with authority to bind and loose on earth what had already been bound or loosed in heaven, Mt.16:18,19; 18:18; 2Cor.5:17-20.
6. There is no organization either larger or smaller than or other than the local church of Christ to function in work or worship.
7. The only creed of the original church belonging to Christ is Christ himself; its only rule of faith and practice is the N.T. – there are no

human creeds, church manuals, disciplines, latter-day revelations, or doctrines of men of any kind that form the basis for its faith, practice, worship or work.

#### **H. SOME TRY TO COUNTER THIS BY ASKING: IF THE LORD HAS ONLY ONE AND IT BEGAN ON PENTECOST, HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR WHAT YOU CALL CHURCHES OF CHRIST ESTABLISHED SINCE THEN AND SPEAK OF THEM AS THE ORIGINAL CHURCH?**

1. First, they fail to distinguish between the two uses of the word church in the N.T.
  - a. Church in the universal sense containing all the saved; that is all who have heard and by faith have obeyed the gospel by which they have been saved, Mt.16:18 Eph.4:4; 1:22,23; Mk.16:15,16; Ac.2:47.
  - b. Church in the local sense; those who having obeyed the gospel and saved by it have joined themselves together in the local church for the purpose of work and worship, Rom.16:16; 1Cor.1:2; Gal.1:2,22; Rev.1:4. Cf. Ac.9:26-28.
2. Second, they fail to recognize the principle laid down in Gen.1:11,12: that “every seed brings forth after its kind”
  - a. What you plant is what you get. Cf. Lk.6:44.
  - b. And the seed of the kingdom, which is the Lord’s church, is the word of God, Lk.8:9-11; Cf. Col.1:1,2, 12-14,18,24; 3:15.
  - c. Cf. Ac.14:21-27; 18:1,5,8; 1Cor.1:1,2 – The seed brought forth after its kind. Cf. Mt.28:18,19; Mk.16:15,16.
3. Therefore, today, whenever and wherever the seed, the word of God, the gospel, is preached (with no additions or subtractions or substitutions), believed and obeyed, local churches of Christ are established.

#### **III. CONCLUSION**

1. Now we know about the original church:
  - a. That it’s the Lord’s church.
  - b. That it’s the church belonging to the Lord.
  - c. That it was and is one in number in the universal sense made up of all the saved; that is, of all those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ as preached beginning on Pentecost.

- d. That it had its beginning in the last days at Jerusalem on the 1<sup>st</sup> Pentecost after Jesus' death, burial and resurrection from the dead.
  - e. That it's the church that bears his name, not some human name, or the name of some religious feast day, or church office, or religious ordinance.
  - f. That it is identified by name or scriptural designation, both collectively and individually.
  - g. That it is the one to which the Lord adds all the saved.
2. Surely you would agree that a church established by man or men at another time or place than the Lord's **COULDN'T** be the original church belonging to the Lord! (Nor could he be the head and Savior of that church!) Nor the one purchased by his blood! Nor the one built by him!
    - a. Note here "The Voice Of History" chart attached
  3. Surely a church that doesn't bear the Lord's name, but some human name, some name unknown to the N.T., can't be the Lord's original church!
  4. If you claimed to have been saved and entered the church of which you are a member in some way or means other than that by which the N.T. reveals one is saved and enters the Lord's church, then the church of which you are a member can't be the Lord' original church!
  5. When it comes to the Bible doctrine of the Lord's church, will you agree with and accept what the Bible says or with what men teach and practice?
  6. Weigh your decision and practice in the light of Mt.15:9; Col.2:20-23; 2Jno.9; Heb.5:8,9; Mt.7:21-27.