

The Church of the Bible – No. 1

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Jesus promised, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). The “rock” to which He referred was the fact, just confessed by Peter, that He is the “Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). Not even His death (i.e., “the gates of Hades”) could prevent the fulfillment of this promise, nor did it.

While the church came into being in the New Testament era, after the Old Testament’s authority was “nailed to the cross” (Col. 2:14), it is correct to call it “the church of the Bible.” It is the subject of promise, prophecy, and type in the Old Testament, which foretells its coming repeatedly.

The only thing Jesus ever built was His church; it is exceedingly precious to Him. Speaking of religious institutions, Jesus said: “Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up” (Mat. 15:13). He was obviously not a pluralist or a populist. Nor was He concerned about political correctness. His statement can mean only one thing: The only religious institution on earth that exists with Divine approval is the church He would – and did – build.

- **With Whom did the church originate?** No mere man promised to build it (although men have built thousands of counterfeits of it through the centuries). No angel made this promise. The only begotten Son of God uttered the promise, which makes the church a Divine institution. In this fact lies the reason men dare not tamper with its entrance requirements, worship, organization, work, or any other part of its inspired blueprint. The church is a human institution in only one sense: Jesus built it to be populated by and for the benefit of human beings alone. Neither any others of God’s creatures nor angels can be members in it.
- **When did it begin?** John the Baptizer, Jesus, and the apostles had been preaching “the kingdom is at hand” for some time before Jesus made the church promise (Mat. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). This announcement related to the long-awaited kingdom their prophets had foretold (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12–13; Dan. 2:44; et al.). He identified his church with the “at hand” kingdom in the context of the promise (Mat. 16:19). Also, in the context, Jesus told the apostles the kingdom would come in their lifetimes (v. 28; cf. Mark 9:1). Those who insist that Jesus failed to establish His kingdom/church at His First Coming imply that Jesus lied, was misinformed, or failed in His plan. None of the above is true. He established His church/kingdom while the apostles (except Judas) were alive. The church is not a kingdom substitute; it **is** the kingdom.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it appeared in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, January 11, 2008].

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