

Lesson 6: The Church in the Old Testament

1. Should we expect the church to be mentioned at all in the Old Testament?

A. *Some say no. They say that the church is not discussed anywhere in the Old Testament.*

1. According to this group and their so-called “postponement theory” Jesus came intending to establish an earthly kingdom, but his plans were thwarted by the disbelieving Jews. So instead he established the church as a temporary “Plan B” until he could come again and give his plans for a kingdom another try.

“It is held that the Old Testament prophets predicted the re-establishment of David’s kingdom and that Christ himself intended to bring this about. It is alleged however, that because the Jews refused his person and work he postponed the establishment of his kingdom until the time of his return. Meanwhile, it is argued, the Lord gathered together ‘the church’ as a kind of interim measure” (Ernest F. Kevan, **Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology** E.F. Harrison, G.W. Bromiley, C.F. Henry, Eds., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999, p. 352).

2. If anything is clear from Scripture, it is that God never needs a Plan B! When God decides to do something, he does it.

Psalm 135:6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

3. Daniel said that God would establish an eternal kingdom during the days of the Roman kings. If (for whatever reason) God did not do that, then Daniel was a false prophet. Daniel’s prophecy about **when** an event would occur is just as important as the event itself.

Deuteronomy 18:22 ²² When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, *but* the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

4. The idea that Jesus is coming again to set up an earthly kingdom is premised on the belief that his first mission to earth was a failure. He

wanted to set up that kingdom the first time, but he failed, and instead we got the church. But what did Jesus say about his mission from the cross? Did he say that he still had things to accomplish and finish? No, he said just the opposite:

John 19:28-30 ²⁸ After this, Jesus knowing that **all things were now accomplished**, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. ... ³⁰ When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished**: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

5. Jesus' mission was not a failure, and our having to take the time to refute such a proposition is a sad commentary on how badly the word of God has been twisted and distorted by denominational division.

B. The church has always been part of God's plan.

1. Ephesians 3 tells us about God's plan for the church:

Ephesians 3 ³ How that by revelation he made known unto me the **mystery**; ... ⁶ That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the **same body**, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: ... ⁹ And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which **from the beginning of the world** hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: ¹⁰ To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known **by the church** the manifold wisdom of God, ¹¹ According to the **eternal purpose** which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: ... ²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, ²¹ Unto him *be* glory **in the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

2. Ephesians 3 tells us that "the church" was established according to "the eternal purpose" of God in Christ to make known his manifold wisdom. You cannot read Ephesians 3 and come away believing that the church was an accident.
3. Verse 21 says that we will give glory to God in the church throughout all ages, world without end. How can that be true if, as some teach, the church is an afterthought that will come to an end when Jesus returns to earth to set up his "real" kingdom?
4. To belittle the importance of the church is to despise the church, and that was a problem also in the first century. In 1 Corinthians 11:22,

Paul rhetorically asked his readers if they *despised* the church of God. I think he would pose the same question to those today who teach that the church is an accident and is not essential. In Lesson 12 we will look at how God views the church.

5. What was Christ's mission? Christ came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10) Those in the church were lost, but now they are saved. Christ's mission is accomplished in the church. Why then does Jesus need to come set up a different organization? He does not.

C. *Another reason we know that the church was not an accident is that the New Testament writers tell us that the church is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.*

1. In Acts 15:14-18, for example, we are told that the restored kingdom (the church) was written about in the Old Testament and was known to God "from the beginning of the world." (This quote in Acts 15 is from Amos 9:11-12.) We are about to look at many other Old Testament prophecies about the church of Christ.

2. Prophecies About the Church from Daniel

A. *Daniel 2:44 is a prophecy about the establishment of the church.*

1. As we saw in Lesson 2, Daniel 2 tells us when the kingdom would be established (during the Roman emperors), and it tells us what that kingdom would be like (an eternal kingdom not made with hands).
2. These characteristics of the kingdom in Daniel 2:44 are applied to the church in Hebrews 12:28:

Daniel 2:44 ⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, **which shall never be destroyed**; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we **receiving** a kingdom **which cannot be moved**, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

3. Foy Wallace: "Daniel's kingdom is indestructible. Paul's kingdom is immovable. If they are not one and the same thing, how can Paul's kingdom be moved to let Daniel's kingdom begin?"

- a) Foy Wallace is the author of God's Prophetic Word, from which some of the material presented today has been taken. We owe a great debt to brother Wallace for working to keep premillennialism out of the church in the early 1900's via a series of debates on the subject.
4. The writer of Hebrews tells us that the church cannot be moved or shaken, and that it is received by man – not created by man. These are the same things that Daniel told us about the church.
5. The passage from Hebrews 12:28 confirms that Daniel 2 is a prophecy about the establishment of the church.

B. Daniel 7:13-14 is a prophecy about the establishment of the church.

Daniel 7:13-14 ¹³ I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and **came to the Ancient of days**, and they brought him near before him. ¹⁴ And there was given him dominion, and glory, **and a kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which **shall not be destroyed**.

1. Notice that the Son of Man in Daniel 7 is pictured as going to the Ancient of Days, not coming from the Ancient of Days. Daniel 7 is describing the ascension of Jesus Christ in Acts 1 – not the return of Christ at the end of the world. Daniel 7:13 describes Acts 1, and Daniel 7:14 describes Acts 2.
2. And the kingdom in verse 14? That kingdom is the church that was established in Acts 2. It is the same eternal and indestructible kingdom that Daniel told us about in Daniel 2 – the one that Daniel told us would be set up during the Roman empire. It is the same immovable kingdom that we saw in Hebrews 12. It will not pass away; it will never be destroyed.

3. Prophecies About the Church from Isaiah

A. Isaiah 2 contains one of the most beautiful descriptions of the church found anywhere in Scripture.

1. "The second chapter of Isaiah is a prophecy of the New Covenant, of the gospel dispensation, and the establishment of the church." Let's read Isaiah 2:1-5.

Isaiah 2:1-5 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and **all nations shall flow unto it.** ³ And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, **and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.** ⁴ And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and **they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks:** nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ⁵ O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

2. The prophecy of Isaiah 2 (and its almost word for word parallel in Micah 4:1-5) is referred to by Jesus in Luke 24:45-47.

Luke 24:45-47 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: ⁴⁷ **And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**

- a) In this passage Jesus declares that two things are written in the Old Testament scriptures: (1) that Christ would suffer and rise again the third day, and (2) that in his name repentance and remission of sins would be preached among all nations **beginning in Jerusalem.**
- b) Now where in the Old Testament was it written that repentance and remission of sins (that is, the gospel) would be declared beginning at Jerusalem? Only two places: Isaiah 2:3 and its parallel in Micah 4:2. (“for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”)
- c) Thus, Jesus told us that Isaiah 2 was a prophecy about the gospel message going forth first from Jerusalem. We can use that information to **date** the fulfillment of Isaiah 2.
- d) **When** did the gospel message of repentance and remission of sins first go out from Jerusalem? That occurred when Peter

preached the first gospel sermon in Acts 2 and told his listeners that they must repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. (Acts 2:38) Isaiah 2 was fulfilled in the first century – specifically on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

- e) **Isaiah 2 is a prophecy about the establishment of the church and the proclamation of the gospel that began in Jerusalem and soon spread throughout the entire world.**
3. Since we now know that Isaiah 2 is a prophecy about the establishment of the church and the proclamation of the gospel in Acts 2, what else can we learn about the church from Isaiah 2?

a) **Verse 2 tells us when the church would be established -- during the last days. What are the last days?**

(1) Fortunately, Peter definitively answers that question for us in Acts 2 when he quotes a passage from Joel 2:28.

Acts 2:16-17 But **this is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷ And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

Joel 2:28 **And it shall come to pass afterward**, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

(2) So whatever period of time is referred to by “the last days,” we know without any doubt that the period of time includes at least part of the first century. To deny that is to deny scripture.

(3) **Aside:** The best way to find Old Testament prophecies about the church is by looking for the “this is that” (Acts 2:16) passages in the New Testament.

(a) *Foy Wallace writes: “When a New Testament writer quotes an Old Testament prophecy and says ‘this is that’ it settles the issue with all who are not so blinded by some theory as to be unable to see, but verily ‘there are none so blind as those who cannot see.’”*

(b) *These passages are crucial in understanding all of the Old*

Testament prophecies. Most of us know that you cannot understand the New Testament apart from the Old Testament, but it is equally true that you cannot understand the Old Testament apart from the New Testament. (1 Peter 1:10-12, for example, tells us that the Old Testament prophets did not fully understand the grace that has now been revealed in the New Testament church.) The Old and New Testaments are a unified whole, and we must study them together.

b) So when are or when were the “last days”?

(1) One popular view is that the last days began with the establishment of the church in the first century, but they have not ended; the “last days” continue today and will continue until Jesus comes again.

(a) *Under this view, the “last days” is another name for the church age, or the final or gospel dispensation.*

(b) *Although many in the church hold this view (and they could be right!), I am not a big fan of this view. It seems odd to refer to a period of 2000 years (and still counting!) as a period of “days.” (But see 2 Peter 3:8, perhaps.)*

(2) Another view (and the one that I hold) is that the “last days” refers not to the current dispensation but rather to the end of the previous dispensation, which was the Jewish dispensation.

(a) *When did the Jewish age end?*

i) At the cross? At the resurrection? At the ascension? At the establishment of the church? In a sense, each of these answers is correct.

ii) Indeed, in a very real sense, the Jewish age continued until AD 70 when the temple was destroyed, the priestly records were destroyed, and the sacrificial system came to a complete and permanent end.

iii) Of course, no one could be saved under the Jewish system apart from Jesus Christ during this interim period. As Jesus told his Jewish listeners in John 14:6, no one can come to the Father apart from the Son. (See the discussion of Romans 9-11 at www.thywordistruth.com.)

(b) *In my view, the “last days” refers not to the entire church age, but rather to the beginning of the church age, which in a sense overlapped the end of the Jewish age. The “last days” then were the last days of the Jewish age, which at its broadest includes the period of time from the cross in AD 33 to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.*

(c) *Whichever view we hold (and either of these two could be correct), we must all agree that the “last days” cannot be a period of time totally confined to the future. Peter told us in Acts 2 that he and his listeners were at that time living in the “last days.” These are the same “last days” in Isaiah 2:2 because, as we have already shown, Isaiah 2 is also a prophecy about the events in Acts 2.*

c) Coming back to what we can learn about the church from Isaiah 2, verse 2 also tells us that all nations would flow unto it.

(1) Recall the many nations that were represented when the first gospel sermon was preached in Acts 2.

Acts 2:9-11 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

(2) In Romans 1:8, Paul told the Romans that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world. Just as Isaiah told us, the gospel began at Jerusalem and quickly spread throughout the known world. All nations flowed unto the church.

d) Verse 3 tells us that in this new church age the word of God would be the standard of judgment among the nations, both Jew and Gentile. Jesus told us the same thing:

John 12:48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him -- **the word that I have spoken** will judge him in the last day.

e) Verse 3 of Isaiah 2 also heralds a time of peace.

(1) Isaiah says “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.”

(a) *Where have we seen this language quoted? These words are engraved on a wall at the United Nations, but if they are engraved anywhere they should instead be engraved on our walls here. The church, not the UN, is the fulfillment of Isaiah 2. No man made organization – be it the UN or a denomination – can fulfill the promise of Isaiah 2.*

(2) In a moment we will look at a very similar in Ezekiel 34. When we get there we will show from Ephesians 2 that this peace in Isaiah 2 is peace between the Jews and the Gentiles. They would not be at enmity in the new covenant; they would become one in Jesus Christ. They would be judged by the same law -- the new covenant.

(3) The state of war between Jew and Gentile would end; they would all be at peace in Jesus Christ. They would together “walk in the light of the Lord” as Isaiah tells us in verse 5. In Isaiah 9:6, the prophet refers to the Messiah as “the Prince of Peace.”

(4) Why didn't God create one denomination for the Jews and another denomination for the Gentiles? Because he wanted the Jews and the Gentiles to be at peace together in one body, the church. More about this in just a moment...

f) **Verse 3 refers to the house of God, which is a common expression for the church in the New Testament.**

(1) **Hebrews 12:22-23** But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ To the general assembly and church of the firstborn.

(2) **Ephesians 2:19** Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

(3) **1 Timothy 3:15** But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

(4) **1 Peter 4:17** For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

g) **In summary, Isaiah 2:1-5 is a prophecy about the**

establishment of the church. It tells us when it would be established; it tells us where it would be established; and it tells us what it would be like after its establishment.

B. Another prophecy about the church is found in Isaiah 11.

1. In Isaiah 11 there are a series of Messianic prophecies that are quoted in the New Testament as having been fulfilled.

2. In verse 1 of Isaiah 11 we read:

Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

3. In verse 10 of Isaiah 11 we read:

Isaiah 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

a) **The meaning of these prophecies is settled by Paul in Romans 15:12, where we read:**

Romans 15:12 And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope [or trust]."

b) **This prophecy is fulfilled in the reign of Christ over the Gentiles in the church, which began in the first century. If the Gentiles could place their trust in Jesus Christ for salvation in the first century (and we know that they could), then Isaiah 11:1 and 10 were fulfilled in the first century.**

c) **For confirmation, we can turn to a similar prophecy in Isaiah 49:5-6, where we read:**

Isaiah 49:6 I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

d) **Paul quotes this passage from Isaiah 49 in Acts 13:46-47, and he tells us it was fulfilled in the first century.**

4. The blessings promised to the Gentiles in Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 49 were fulfilled in the first century. Those promised blessings were received then as they are received now – in the church through Jesus Christ.

5. Now that we know verse 1 and verse 10 of Isaiah 11 were fulfilled in the first century, let's look at verses 6-9 of Isaiah 11:

Isaiah 11:6-9 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

a) **Is the fulfillment of these verses a yet future event or have these verses already been fulfilled? The Jehovah's Witnesses (among many others) will tell you that these verses are yet to be fulfilled.**

b) **Yet if the fulfillment of verses 6-9 is in the future, then don't we need some explanation for why those verses are preceded and followed by verses that we know with certainty were fulfilled in the first century? Doesn't that seem a bit inconsistent?**

(1) This is not to say that Old Testament prophecies cannot have dual fulfillments – one imminent and the other future – or that the Old Testament cannot have prophecies of distant events nearby prophecies of contemporary events, but we need to make sure we have contextual support for such conclusions. If we find ourselves jumping back and forth in time by thousands of years as we move from verse to verse, it is probably a clue that we have gone wrong somewhere in our interpretation.

c) **The surest way to go wrong in the interpretation of prophecy is to pick verses here and there out of the Old Testament without looking at the surrounding text. To understand Isaiah 11:6-9, we need to understand Isaiah 11:10, and Paul explains Isaiah 11:10 to us in Romans 15:12.**

d) **The only possible conclusion is that verses 6-9 (like verses 1-5 and verse 10) were fulfilled in the first century.**

(1) Verses 6-9 of Isaiah 10 (like Isaiah 2) refer to the peace that exists in the church between groups that were formerly at war. Those verses describe in beautiful, figurative terms the blessings and peace in Christ enjoyed by those who have been

added to his church.

(2) Why does God use figurative language? For an answer to that question, see the notes on Daniel and Ezekiel available at www.thywordistruth.com.

e) **Premillennialists tell us that some of the verses were fulfilled in the first century; but others have not yet been fulfilled. False teachers love to chop up the word of God!**

(1) For example, Psalm 110 depicts Jesus as sitting at God's right hand and ruling in the midst of his enemies. (This passage is quoted many times in the New Testament as having already been fulfilled.) Yet what do the premillennialists say? They say that although Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 110:4 have been fulfilled, the remaining verses in Psalm 110 have not yet been fulfilled. How ridiculous!

4. Prophecies About the Church from Ezekiel

A. A beautiful prophecy about the church is found in Ezekiel 34:20-26.

1. In John 10:16 Jesus said that he was shepherd over two groups of sheep -- two groups that he would bring together into one fold.

John 10:16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

2. Jesus in John 10 was alluding to a prophecy from Ezekiel 34:20-26.

Ezekiel 34:20-26 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, *even* I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. ...²² Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; **and I will judge between cattle and cattle.**²³ And I will set up **one shepherd** over them, and he shall feed them, *even* **my servant David**; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. ...²⁵ And I will make with them a **covenant of peace**, and **will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land**; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.²⁶ And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

3. As you read Ezekiel 34, you notice immediately how similar it is to Isaiah 2.
 - a) **Ezekiel tells us that God would judge between cattle and cattle; Isaiah tells us God would judge between nation and nation. The cattle in Ezekiel 34 are the nations in Isaiah 2.**
 - b) **Ezekiel tells us that the “covenant of peace” would be the standard by which God would judge between the cattle; Isaiah tells us that the “law of the Lord” would be the standard by which God would judge between the nations. The covenant of peace in Ezekiel 34 is the law of the Lord in Isaiah 2.**
 - c) **Ezekiel tells us that God would set up one shepherd over them, even my servant David; Isaiah tells us that “he” (referring to the Lord) would judge among the nations. The one shepherd referred to as David in Ezekiel 34 is the Lord in Isaiah 2. These descriptions are all Messianic titles for Jesus Christ.**
 - d) **Ezekiel tells us that under this New Covenant evil beasts would cease out of the land and the cattle would dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods; Isaiah tells us that the nations would beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks – they would cease to wage war. Both descriptions apply to the peace that exists between Jew and Gentile in the church. But how do we know that? We know that from Ephesians 2.**

B. *Ephesians 2 is the key to understanding Isaiah 2 and Ezekiel 34*

1. Isaiah 2 and Ezekiel 34 both use beautiful, figurative language to describe a time of peace. Paul in Ephesians 2 explains the “peace” to which the prophets were referring.
2. Acts 2, Isaiah 2, and Ezekiel 34 are tied together by Ephesians 2. Read Ephesians 2:11-18.

Ephesians 2:11-18 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; ¹² That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the

blood of Christ. ¹⁴ **For he is our peace**, who hath made both one, and hath **broken down the middle wall of partition** *between us*; ¹⁵ Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, **so making peace**; ¹⁶ And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having **slain the enmity** thereby: ¹⁷ And came and **preached peace** to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

3. Do you notice the similarity between Ephesians 2 and Isaiah 2 and Ezekiel 34?
 - a) **Where Isaiah said “nation” and Ezekiel said “cattle”, Paul speaks of circumcision and uncircumcision and of Jew and Gentile.**
 - b) **Where Isaiah speaks of an end to war and Ezekiel speaks of an end to wild beasts in the land, Paul speaks of the middle wall of partition being broken down between Jew and Gentile.**
4. In Ephesians 2, Paul is telling us that in the church there is peace between Jew and Gentile. Notice how often the word “peace” is used in Ephesians 2. The peace in Ephesians 2 is the same peace in Isaiah 2.
5. A key focus of scripture in both the Old Testament and the New Testament is the peace that exists between Jew and Gentile in the church. God was bringing blessings to the entire world through Jesus Christ just as he had promised to Abraham, and he was at the same time removing the enmity that had existed between his special people, the Jews, and the rest of the world. Paul has a great deal more to say about these issues in Romans 9-11. (See the class notes on Romans available at www.thywordistruth.com.)
6. Today, we do not have the same Jewish/Gentile problems that the first century church experienced. Why? Because sadly the church today is almost entirely composed of Gentiles. But isn't there still a lesson for us in these verses? Whatever divisions may exist out in the world based on economics, education, race, or whatever – we must never allow those worldly divisions to create divisions and enmity in the church of Christ. Even today in many cities you will find a “white church” and a “black church.” How sad! We in the church are all one in Jesus Christ. There is one church and one body.

Galatians 3:26-28 For you are all sons of God through faith |

in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

C. *There is a very easy way to remember where the key scriptures about the church are found in the Bible. Just remember the number 2!*

1. A remarkable number of key passages about the church occur in second chapters of the Bible! We have looked at Daniel 2, Joel 2, Isaiah 2, Ephesians 2, and Acts 2.
2. Foy Wallace rightly says that Joel 2, Isaiah 2, and Ephesians 2 merge in Acts 2.
 - a) **He also says that the premillennialists who think that these prophecies are yet future should add “two and two,” and seeing what the sum of it is they should be convinced that they are wrong!**
 - b) **He writes: “Acts 2 is the hub of the Bible. Everything before it points forward to it; everything after points backward to it.” (This is perhaps a slight overstatement in that some Scriptures certainly point forward to the end of time – but even those verses could be said to involve Acts 2, because at the end of time Jesus Christ will deliver that kingdom of Acts 2 up to the Father. See 1 Corinthians 15:24.)**

D. *Perhaps the strangest Old Testament prophecy about the church is found in Ezekiel 40 – 43:12.*

1. Those chapters contain a detailed architectural blueprint describing a huge temple that has never been built, yet God tells Ezekiel that this temple is where He will abide forever (43:7).
2. So what does this huge temple represent? If we want to know what this temple is, we can work at the problem backwards by asking: Where is God going to abide forever? The answers to each question will be the same.
 - a) **In Exodus 25:8 God said “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” In many ways the rest of the Bible is simply a variation on that theme. God wanted to dwell among his people, and yet his people were sinners. What was the solution?**

- b) John 1:14 tells us that “the word became flesh and dwelt among us.” A literal translation of this passage is that the word became flesh and “tabernacled” among us. God became flesh and dwelt among us.
 - c) In Revelation 21:3 (speaking of the triumphant church after the judgment of Rome) God says “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”
 - d) 1 Corinthians 3:16 (“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”)
 - e) Paul (describing the church) writes in Ephesians 2:22 (“in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”)
3. We as Christians are looking forward to many blessings – but God dwelling among us is not one of them! That blessing is already true in the church! We in the church are the dwelling place of God in the Spirit!
4. When God showed Ezekiel the blueprints for this giant temple, he was telling Ezekiel something about the church! To read more about these chapters, see Lesson 22 in the Notes on Ezekiel available at www.thywordistruth.com.

5. Other Prophecies About the Church

- A. **2 Samuel 7:12-16** And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: ¹⁵ But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I put away before thee. ¹⁶ And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.
- B. **Psalm 2:6-7** Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. ⁷ I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.
- C. **Isaiah 9:6-7** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of *his* government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and

with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

- D. Isaiah 35:5-10** ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶ Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. ⁷ And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be* grass with reeds and rushes. ⁸ And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*. ⁹ No lion shall be there, nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk *there*: ¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
- E. Jeremiah 31:31-34** Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: ³³ But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.
- F. Hosea 1:10-11** Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, Ye *are* the sons of the living God. ¹¹ Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great *shall be* the day of Jezreel.
- G. Malachi 3:1-2** Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. ² But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: