



THE CHURCH THAT ISAIAH SAW

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When the Old Testament prophets pointed their telescopes toward New Testament times, they saw the church of Christ. Today, we look at the church as the prophet Isaiah saw it, nearly seven hundred years before it was built. Welcome to the broadcast today. The church is the greatest establishment that has ever been or ever will be on the face of this earth. It did not emerge in the course of time but was firmly planted by the hand of God. It had a definite beginning, and it has a divine purpose for existing in the world.

Our scripture reading will come from Isaiah 2:1-5. These words, written nearly seven centuries before Jesus was born: *"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; 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 anymore. O house of Jacob, come and let us walk In the light of the LORD."* The New Testament, of course, reveals the church which Jesus built; when it was built; where it was built; by Whom it was built; and how men and women become members of it. But so does the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years before it was established. Today, our study will deal with "The Church That Isaiah Saw."

The church of Christ is a divine institution built by Christ 2,000 years ago and is the product of a plan which reaches back before the beginning of what we know as time. The church was not in any way an afterthought of God or a happy coincidence of events. It was instead carefully planned by God, executed by Christ, and revealed by the Holy Spirit. Paul said in Ephesians 3:10-11 that the manifold wisdom of

God is made known by the church, “according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” In chapter one, Paul shows that those who are in Christ, meaning His church, were predestinated by God to be His people and in verse 23, he calls the church Christ’s “body which is the fulness of Him who fills all in all.” In other words, the church of Christ is the manifestation of all that God planned and purposed from before the beginning of time. This means that the church is not just a phase in God’s unfolding plan for man, it is the fulfillment of God’s plan. It is not a temporary measure to fill a gap in God’s plan, it was and is the fruition of God’s plan for the ages. Now, you may say, I thought the sending of Christ was the fulfillment of God’s plan. Yes, that’s certainly correct, but the church is the result of Christ’s redemptive work. Paul also told the Ephesians in Ephesians 2:13-16 “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both (Jew and Gentile) one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” The church is the result of God’s planning and execution of those plans throughout time.

Now, with that said, it shouldn’t surprise us to find the Old Testament prophets talking about the church as they pointed their divine telescopes far ahead in time. The prophets of the Old Testament not only knew about the church, but they also prophesied about it. That’s important to understand because there is a teaching among many denominations that suggests that the church is only one step along the way in God’s program. In fact, historically, those who promoted this doctrine a few years ago went as far as to suggest that the church was not God’s primary plan but rather a necessary stopgap since His original plan was interrupted by the Jewish leaders’ rejection of the Messiah. In other words, Jesus came to offer His kingdom to the Jews of the first century, but since they rejected Christ, He delayed that plan and instead set up the church and brought Gentiles into it until one day, Christ will come again and the next time the Jewish nation will receive Him, and He will finally be able to set up His kingdom.

Well, first, the Jews’ rejection of Jesus in no way took God by surprise. They didn’t throw a wrench in God’s plan. They did not force God to change directions and come up with an alternative until a better time. Second, the bible does not describe the church as an alternative, or later plan to fill a gap in time, but rather it was the result of what the prophets prophesied about. Even though many prophecies of the Old Testament had a short-term and more immediate fulfillment among the Jewish nation of that time, ultimately, their prophecies pointed to the Christ and the church that would result from His work. The church which would be made up of Jew and Gentile alike with no distinction made between them, according to Galatians 3:26-28. Some proponents of the doctrine of dispensational premillennialism, which is probably the most popular idea about end times among denominations today, say that this “church age” was hidden from the Old Testament prophets – that they did not know anything about it. We shall see, however, that was simply not the case as Isaiah clearly knew about it and prophesied about it.

Isaiah is just one of the prophets who foretold the church, and he did so in a way that we not only can see the importance and eternal nature of the church, but we can learn some things about its establishment that will help us identify it and pick it out from amidst the maze of confusion that has been created by denominationalism and humanly built religious institutions. Men have been a myriad of organizations over the many centuries since Christ and His apostles lived on earth, but Jesus only built one church and Isaiah, seven-hundred years before the fact, foretold its establishment.

Let's read again Isaiah 2, beginning in verse 1: *"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; 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 anymore. O house of Jacob, come and let us walk In the light of the LORD."*

First, we know that Isaiah is talking about the church because he calls it the "Lord's house". Some contend that phrase refers to a new temple to be built in Jerusalem in future days. But when we get to the New Testament, we find the apostles referring the Lord's house as the church. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:15 how to conduct himself "in the house of God, WHICH IS the CHURCH of the living God..." The physical temple of the Old Testament typified the spiritual temple that Christ would build under the New Covenant. Paul told the church at Corinth (speaking OF the church) that "you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) So, Isaiah says that the Lord's house would one day be established which the apostles later identified as the Lord's church. B

Second, notice WHEN he says it would be established. He says, "In THE LAST DAYS, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established." Now, many confuse this expression "the last days" with the days immediately preceding the end of time but that's not what that phrase refers to in the bible. When bible writers used the expression 'the last days' they weren't talking about the end of time or the second coming of Christ but rather they were talking about the final dispensation of time that Christ would usher in. We are living in the last dispensation of time on earth NOW and have been since Christ came and established the church. How do we know that? Well for one thing, the phrase "last days" was used all throughout the Old Testament going all the way back to Genesis and the context shows us that the phrase merely means 'later days' or 'future times.'" It doesn't necessarily refer to a specific window of time before the end of the world but merely to days still future from the time the words were spoken. Second, comparing the Old Testament prophecies with the writing of the New Testament shows this to be the case. For example, the prophet Joel prophesied about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the outpouring of power in the early church in Joel 2:28-32. Now then, notice when Peter says Joel's prophecy was fulfilled. In Acts 2, after the apostles were immersed in the power of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, some accused them of being drunk but Peter denied the accusation saying beginning in verse 15: Acts 2:15-17 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. [16] 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:" You see, Peter said that they were then in "the last days". And notice the connection Peter makes when he says, "THIS is that" and "in the last days". So, Isaiah is simply saying that in the future, and more specifically in the last dispensation of time which would begin with at Christ, the mountain of the Lord's house (the church) would be established.

Third, he tells us WHERE the church would be established. He says in Isaiah 2:3 "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." Zion refers to Jerusalem and Isaiah says that when the Lord's house would be established, the law would go forth FROM that city. Well, that's where we find the

apostles in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost where Peter identified them as being in the last days seeing the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. And on that day, Peter, filled with and inspired by the Holy Spirit issued the terms of entering the New Covenant and the church of Christ. He preached that Jesus was the promised Christ and had been exalted as King at God's right hand. The people convicted of their sins, and believing the message Peter preached about Christ asked, "what shall we do?" and Peter commanded them in verse 38 to "repent and be baptized in the name of (or by the authority of) Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins" and when they did, according to verses 41 and 47, the Lord added them to the church. Isaiah says that when the law went forth from Jerusalem (not Rome by the way) that all nations would flow into the Lord's house. That's what the book of Acts chronicles beginning with the day of Pentecost. Jews and Gentiles, people of all nations, entered the church after hearing and obeying the preaching of the gospel.

So, notice not only when the church was to be established, where it was to be established, how people entered it when it was established but also WHO would enter it when it was established. He says "ALL NATIONS" would flow unto it. Well, we read in Acts 2:5, that on the Day of Pentecost "...there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." And within a short time of Pentecost (just a few years) Gentiles began to enter it. This is a beautiful picture that Isaiah is painting. You may remember that the literal temple that stood in Jerusalem during the Old Testament dispensation could only be entered by priestly Jews. Gentiles were restricted to the "court of the Gentiles" which was a separate part along the outer parameter of the temple area. It was blocked off by a large stone wall and a Gentile could be put to death if they crossed that barrier. Christ, by His death upon the cross, tore down that wall and Gentiles were allowed to enter His spiritual temple along with the Jews who placed their faith in Christ. So, Isaiah tells us that when the Lord's house would be established, ALL nations would flow into it. So, you see, the church that Isaiah saw, and that Christ later built, was established in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost nearly two-thousand years ago. It was not established in Galilee during the ministry of Jesus. It wasn't established along the banks of the Jordan River by John the Baptist. It wasn't established in Rome or in Germany or Switzerland or England or Scotland or America. It wasn't built in 1517 or in 1609 or in 1738... but it was built in 30 A.D. And friend, let me kindly say, that you and I would be wise to be sure we're part of the church that was built at that time and in Jerusalem and not in one that was built in some other place at some other time by some other man.

Finally, notice the nature of the church as Isaiah foretold it. Verse 4, he says: "And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." This would be a spiritual organization not a national or geo-political one. It would not take up arms and fight as ancient Israel was called to do. It would not conquer territory and subjugate people by military conquest or by physical force. Rather, this kingdom would be established, would spread, and would be safeguarded by the work of Christ and the gospel. The word of God is its defense. The preaching of the gospel is its only assault on the forces of darkness and wickedness. It would not be a temporal kingdom set up by Christ as some people are anticipating. It would be a spiritual kingdom ruled over by Christ from the New Jerusalem, heaven above, and its territory would be the hearts of men the world over. Now, how do we access this "house of God" that Isaiah prophesied about? Notice verse 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." You don't wait for some irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit, but rather you must simply decide to go up to the mountain of the Lord and be taught of his ways. In other words, you must be willing to hear the gospel of Christ, believe it and

obey it. Only by hearing and being taught the ways of the Lord can one be converted and enter Christ's kingdom. Jesus said, "Everyone that has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes unto me." (John 6:45)

Are you part of this wonderful institution Isaiah prophesied about or are you instead part of a church built by man? Have you been taught of God by hearing the gospel preached and have you believed it and obeyed it as they did on the Day of Pentecost when they entered that which Isaiah foretold? Have you repented of your sins and been baptized by Christ's authority FOR the forgiveness of your sins? If not, I say along with Isaiah in verse 5 of our text: "...come and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

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