

When Did the Church Begin?

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There are those today who seem to be confused about the starting point or beginning of the Church. Covenant Theologians teach that the Church began in the Old Testament. The claim is made that the Church of today is simply a continuation of the Church that began with Israel in the Old Testament. Others suggest that the Church began at one point in the gospel accounts while Jesus was still upon earth (Matt. 16:18, John 20:22). There are those who even trace the beginning of the Church back to the roots of John the Baptist (Landmark Baptists and the secessionist theory). Others teach that the Church began later in the book of Acts (hyper-dispensationalism) instead of on the Day of Pentecost. Some teach that it began in Acts 13 and others in Acts 28. I want to suggest that the Bible teaches the Church began in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost. It could not exist prior to this time as demonstrated by the following arguments.

#1

The church could not exist until after Christ's resurrection and ascension for this is when He became head of the Church.

Ephesians 1:19-23

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, **when he raised him from the dead**, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, **and gave him to be the head over all things to the church**, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

How could there be a Church until Christ ascended and became its head? A body cannot live without a head! The Scriptures in Ephesians suggest that the church is built upon the foundation of Christ's resurrection and ascension, meaning that the Church could not exist in the Old Testament or the gospels, since Christ had not yet

risen from the dead. *In other words, these two events (resurrection and ascension of Christ) needed to occur before the church could be formed.* Since these events did not occur in the Old Testament or during Christ's earthly ministry with the apostles, the Church could not yet have existed. It is silly to argue for the existence of the Church prior to these two events. The Church simply cannot exist apart from its Head. The Head of the Church is the glorified, exalted, risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the church could not begin until after the ascension.

#2

The teaching of the two loaves on Pentecost (Leviticus 23:16), which followed Passover (the death of Christ), taught the typical truth of how the Jews and Gentiles would be brought together into one loaf (1 Cor. 10:17), or one Church body on the Day of Pentecost (Eph. 2:16; 3:6). This would result in the formation of the New Testament Church. Thus, Pentecost became the type of the formation of the future Church and the Day of Pentecost was the exact day when the Church came into existence. The Bible says, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come" (Acts 2:1). This means that the particular day of Pentecost had never been typically fulfilled. However, in answer to typology the Church was now fulfilling the message or picture portrayed by Pentecost. The true Pentecost and its fulfillment had finally arrived. The birth of the Church was the fulfillment of God's prophetic calendar as God gave it in Leviticus 23. The Church would be born on the Day of Pentecost bringing both Jews and Gentiles together into one body.

When following through with Scriptural typology one can conclude the Church began on Pentecost. Pentecost (the formation of the Church) followed the death of Christ - our Passover (Lev. 23: 4-5; 1 Cor. 5:7). This means the Church could not be formed and exist on earth prior to Christ's death. The birth of the Church actually follows on the heels of Christ's death and resurrection. Pentecost actually occurred fifty days after Christ's resurrection in fulfillment of the typology of Israel's feast days. Pentecost means "fifty" because it came fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:15-22) which typically corresponds to fifty days after the resurrection of Christ. Christ is the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:23). This marks the timing of the Church's beginning. It began fifty

days after Christ's resurrection. This period of fifty days would include His forty-day post-resurrection ministry (Acts 1:3). After the forty days the disciples were awaiting the promise of the Holy Spirit's arrival to begin the Church which focused on the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). Following Christ's ascension (Acts 1:8) this promise became true (Acts 2:1).

The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost as the Spirit's promised arrival came. What a day it was! The timing was accurate and in line with Old Testament typology. *The Church was born exactly fifty days after the resurrection of Christ.* This is when the Holy Spirit came. The student of Scripture can see God's prophetic calendar of Leviticus 23 being fulfilled in the birthday of the Church. The time period for the Church's beginning was set by God and fixed permanently on His prophetic calendar. Of course, this poses a problem for those who think the Church started later in the book of Acts following Paul's salvation (Acts 9) or when he began his ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 28:28). It also poses a problem for those who believe the Church began in the Old Testament under the disguise of Israel. The truth speaks for itself and cannot be overlooked without missing God's plain meaning and intent. Fifty days after Christ's resurrection the Church would be born and come into existence. It had never been born before. It would not be born later in the book of Acts. It would start according to God's prophetic calendar and God's exact timetable on the Day of Pentecost. Let's read and believe our Bibles!

#3

Since the Church is actually Christ's body, welded together by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), the Church's birthday could only occur on Pentecost, when this Spirit baptism initially took place. George Zeller correctly observes: "The key to when the Church began is this: If we can determine when Spirit baptism first began, then we will know when the church began. When did God first baptize believers into His body? When were believers first placed into the body of Christ? To answer this is to determine the day on which the church began."

Acts 1:5

“For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

Jesus predicted when the Spirit baptism would occur. He was looking ahead to the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit which would occur for the first time on the Day of Pentecost and create the Church (Gal. 3:27-28). Jesus said that Spirit baptism would take place "not many days hence." Everyone was looking forward to Pentecost as the actual time the Spirit would arrive (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8). This means that it would happen soon, in a matter of days. In actuality it happened just 10 days later on the day of Pentecost. Please notice that this baptism was not something that had occurred previously. Therefore, the Church and the subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit could only occur on the Day of Pentecost when the promise of the Holy Spirit was actually given (Acts 2:33 - “having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost”). The promise of the Spirit (Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13) was connected with the Day of Pentecost and this is when the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit occurred to initially form the Church. People were initially “added” to the newly formed body of Christ. Ever since this time people are continually being added to the organism of the Church as they come to faith in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

The Church was initially formed and continues to grow by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This baptism immerses us in Christ and gives us a perfect standing in Christ before the Father (2 Cor. 5:21).

Acts 2:41

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

Acts 2:47

“Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

The expression “added” speaks of the Holy Spirit adding these people to the New Testament Church and becomes a key indicator of when the baptizing work of the Spirit initially began. It began on the Day of Pentecost. This is when the Church was formed. Although some like to apply these verses to Church membership in the local assemblies, they are actually teaching the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit that adds us to the true Church - the “church of the firstborn” (Heb. 12:23). We need membership in the true Church by the baptism of the Holy Spirit before we become a member of any local church.

Peter later talks about this day as “the beginning” of the Church.

Acts 11:15-17

“And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them (The Gentiles), as on us **at the beginning** (the Day of Pentecost). Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost (on the Day of Pentecost). Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift (the Holy Spirit – Acts 10:45) as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

Peter confirms in unmistakable terms that the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost as a gift and this is when His baptizing ministry began where He would save and create the Church. There should be no question in relation to when the Church began. The Bible tells us when it began in plain language.

#4

The timing of the Holy Spirit’s coming into the world as the Baptizer is very important. The Church could not be born without His entrance into the world as the personal baptizer and One who forms the Church. We must remember that Israel existed for centuries prior to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, since no Spirit baptism took place in the Old Testament, the Church could not have been formed or existed before Pentecost. Spirit baptism is something that is only promised on New Testament ground (Acts 1:5; Gal. 3:27-28; Romans 6:1-4; Col. 2:10-13). Of course, water baptism actually becomes a picture of this true baptism as it portrays our immersion in Christ. The

obvious point is this. *There can be no Church without the coming of the Holy Spirit and His baptizing ministry.* This means there could be no Church in the Old Testament, or during the days of Jesus on earth, since Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would come only *after* He left planet earth and ascended to Heaven. This is when the Spirit would perform His baptizing work and form the Church.

John 16:7

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

John 14:16

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”

Without the Spirit’s arrival there could be no baptizing work and no Church. The Holy Spirit would be sent only *after* Christ’s departure. The promise of the Spirit’s arrival and His baptizing ministry into Christ would bring a new awareness of Christ’s life to every believer.

John 14:20

“At that day (Pentecost) ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

#5

Jesus prophesied about the future Church that He was going to build indicating that this was a new program, new work, and new people that had not previously existed (Matthew 16:18 – “I will build my church”). This is future and indicates that at the moment He spoke these words, the church was not yet in existence, nor could it be in existence, during His earthly ministry. It was still a future phenomenon and event that would occur after His departure.

#6

The Church could not exist in the Old Testament or during the gospels, when Christ was on earth, for the simple reason that only *after* the ascension of Christ the Church was gifted.

Ephesians 4:7-9

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

The Bible is very clear on this. The Church was gifted *after* Christ’s resurrection and not before. Therefore, it could not be in existence prior to this time. Whoever heard of a Church without any gifts? The fact that the Church was gifted following Christ’s resurrection and ascension implies that it began after His resurrection, and at the time we have already Biblically confirmed as the Day of Pentecost, which occurred fifty days after Christ’s resurrection.

#7

The Church is not found in the Old Testament nor could it have been formed in the Old Testament (Eph. 3:1-9). Ephesians 3:5 makes a crystal-clear statement about the beginning of the Church: “Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” The church was a “mystery” in the sense that it was not God’s operating purpose in the Old Testament. The Church is the new purpose of God! It is a new purpose for a new age. *It is not a question of the degree of revelation but of the fact of it.* It is a completely new revelation and new purpose of God unknown to the Old Testament prophets (see 1 Peter 1:10-12). This means that the Church was formed during the New Testament era.

The church is also a unique organism or living body where both Jews and Gentiles are united together in one body and where they are on an equal basis before God (Eph. 3:6). Out of these two parties of people God has made “one new man” (Eph. 2:15). In fact, in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28). It’s important to understand that a situation like this never existed in the Old Testament. Therefore, the Church could not have existed in the Old Testament period or any time prior to when these two parties were brought together in Christ. We do know that these two parties were welded together by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13 – “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles”). We have also concluded that the baptism of the Spirit

began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 11:15) and that Peter vindicated his ministry among the Gentiles seeing that they had become “fellowheirs” with the Jews (Eph. 3:6) in the same body – New Testament Church. It’s very clear that the Jews and Gentiles were brought together into the body of Christ (the Church) after the Old Testament, after John the Baptist, and after the earthly ministry of Christ.

Ephesians 2:21-22 also verifies that the Church is God’s temple or the “habitation of God through the Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19 also remind us how God dwells within His Church in the person of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament period, God had a tabernacle and temple for His dwelling places, but today He has a body of believers personally indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The difference between the two temples is another reason to verify that the Church only had a New Testament origin and beginning on the Day of Pentecost for this is when the Spirit was promised (Acts 1:5) to come and indwell God’s people forever (John 14:16-17).

#8

Within the context of the same verse the Church is said to be clearly distinct from the national people of Israel.

1 Corinthians 10:32

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.”

Romans 9:4-5

“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Natural Israel and the Church are clearly distinguished in the Bible. This means the Church could not have previously existed in the Old Testament under the disguise and name of Israel. Paul’s distinction would be meaningless if Israel were the same as the Church. In addition, within the New Testament, natural Israel and Gentiles are contrasted after the Church was already established (Acts 3:12; 4:8,

10; 5:21, 31, 35; 21:19). This would also indicate that Israel is a distinct entity from the Gentile people, even as Israel is a distinct entity from the Church. *It is still convincing to realize that the Bible never calls Gentiles Israel or Israel the Church. They are always seen as separate entities.* The term Israel is never used to replace another national or spiritual entity of people. Here is the point. The Church could not exist in the Old Testament under the disguised name of Israel since the two are separate entities.

In the book of Acts both terms (Israel and Church) exist simultaneously. The term Israel is used twenty times and the term Church nineteen times. Yet the two groups are always kept distinct. In fact, there is no historical evidence that the term Israel was identified with the Church until A.D. 160. History, theology, grammatical, literal, and exegetical interpretation, and common sense, all argue against interpreting the Church and Israel as the same identity. They are distinct groups who had two different beginnings. Israel's historic birth took place when God called Abram out of the Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 12:1-3; Acts 7:1-5) and promised that his descendents would be a great nation. The Church's birth took place on the Day of Pentecost when God fulfilled His promise to send the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1). Israel and the Church are two distinct entities with two separate birthdays.

#9

The relationship that the Jews have with the Gentiles in the Church is called a "new man" (Eph. 2:15). This indicates the Church is something totally new in God's design, working, and program. It's a new work of God and new people of God not previously existing in the Old Testament era or prior to Pentecost. *When something is new it's new.* Why not believe the Bible? The Church was not something that previously existed until God united or welded the Jews and Gentiles together into the one body by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This occurred on the Day of Pentecost as we have already confirmed. The Church is a new phenomenon, a new people, and a new outworking of the purpose of God on planet earth. God has decided to have another group of people and program that is related to a "new man" (Eph. 2:15) - the Church. *The Church is new in every way.* It's a new concept, a new movement and work of God,

and a new people of God that is unrelated to God's previous work with national Israel. The Church is a new people composed of both Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 3:6; Gal. 3:28) and this new group and entity of people is totally unrelated to the previous working of God with Israel. *The Church is not a new Israel but a "new man" (Eph. 2:15).* There is a difference! The Church is a "new man" where both Jews and Gentiles (people of different nationalities) share the same blessings in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). In the "new man" work of God both Jews and Gentiles share equal privileges. One group of people do not have spiritual superiority or possess a degree of importance over the other (Gal. 3:28). Both are on an equal plane and share the same level of dignity before God. This is indeed a new man in every way. It's not the previous people (Israel) revised, remade, or reworked. It's a new people composed of both Jews and Gentiles that have different promises, purposes, and programs (Rom. 9:4-5).

#10

The Church is said to be built upon the foundational teachings of the New Testament "apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20). This means that the Church could not exist until the New Testament prophets began to lay the foundational teachings of the Bible and present Church truth for New Testament living. In other words, the Church came into existence only when the New Testament prophets and apostles were gifted to teach the Church and lay its foundation. This apostolic foundational teaching is confirmed to have taken place in close proximity to the Day of Pentecost and afterward.

Acts 2:42

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The "apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20) were of the New Testament (there were no apostles in the Old Testament) and they were the foundational men of the Church through their gifts of teaching. When a building is constructed the foundation is first laid or established. This makes sense and would mean that the Church could not have its foundation in the Old Testament or any time before the day of the New Testament apostles. This is because the foundation was not yet laid by the New Testament apostles and prophets. Only New

Testament apostles and prophets with their New Testament teachings for the Church could be responsible for establishing and building up the Church. This is an important fact and informs us that there could be no Church in existence prior to the New Testament apostles and prophets. John the Baptist was the last Old Testament prophet and none of the Old Testament prophets prior to Pentecost spoke of the Church nor gave out truth for Church ministry and life. Why? It's because there was no Church prior to the New Testament apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:5 - "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets [New Testament apostle and prophets] by the Spirit").

George Zeller remarks on Ephesians 2:20:

"If the church had its beginnings in the Old Testament period then we might expect the verse to say something like this: 'And are built upon the foundation of Abraham and Moses and David and the Old Testament prophets.'"

What about Hyper-Dispensationalism and the Church?

Extreme dispensationalists claim that there were several different Churches that began at different times throughout New Testament history. One was a kingdom or Jewish Church designed only for the Jews. It was formed in the gospels and existed in the early part of the book of Acts. They then conclude that the Great Commission, Lord's Table, and baptism are for the Jewish Church and not for the Church that exists today. There was also another Church composed of both Jews and Gentiles that was formed later in the book of Acts as a result of Paul's commissioning and witnessing to the Gentile masses (Acts 13 or 28). Other hyper or extreme dispensationalists go a step further and create three Churches by distinguishing between a bride Church, which existed in Acts, and a body Church which existed in the epistles (Bullingerites – people who follow the teachings of E. W. Bullinger). This brings the total to three Churches – Jewish Church (gospel period and early Acts), Bride Church (later Acts), and Body Church (epistles).

To say the least this is very confusing and results in an unwarranted division of the Scripture. We are told to "rightly divide" (2 Tim. 2:15)

the Scriptures but not overly divide them! Where do we read any specifics in the Scripture about a Jewish Church, a Bride Church, or a Body Church? The Ultradispensationalist has simply gone too far in his Bible distinctions and divisions related to the Church. Hence, he is called a hyper or extreme dispensationalist. It's very clear that the terms bride and body are nothing more than descriptive terms relating to the same Church that Jesus spoke about and commissioned (Matt. 16:18; 28:19-20), the same Church that was formed on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47), and the same Church that Paul defined and doctrinally outlined in the epistles (Eph. 2:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18).

Of course, many of the hyper or more extreme dispensationalists attempt to start the Church in Acts 13 or 28 in connection with Paul's statements about turning to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; Acts 28:25-26). However, there are three places prior to Paul's conversion (Acts 9) where Paul states that he persecuted the Church of God (Gal. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:8). It would be meaningless for Paul to speak about some other kind of Church that he was not already teaching about in his epistles. The obvious point is this. *The same Church that Paul was teaching about in his epistles was the same Church he persecuted before he was saved.* Consequently, this means the same Church must have been in existence prior to Acts 9 which gives the account of Paul's conversion. This refutes the ultradispensational view which says that the Church began in Acts 13 or Acts 28. It actually began in Acts 2. Acts 13 and Acts 28 were significant *turning points* (from the Jews to the Gentiles - Acts 13:46 and Acts 28:25-28) but they did not mark the *starting point* of the Church (Acts 1:5; 11:15).

It's interesting that in Romans 16:7 Paul sends his greetings to the saints who were "in Christ before me" (before he was saved). Being "in Christ" is a New Testament truth that speaks about Jews and Gentiles being united together into Christ's body - the Church (Galatians 3:28 - "for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"). This also tells us that the Church must have begun prior to Paul's conversion (Acts 9) and when he officially turned to the Gentiles later in the book of Acts. Let the Scriptures speak for themselves. There is only one body (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 10:17; 1 Cor. 12:13) or one Church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18) - not two or three. Both Biblical sense and common sense verify this to us.

What about John the Baptist and the Church?

It is the claim of some Baptist groups that their church (the Baptist Church) was intended to be the true original Church that was founded by Jesus Christ through the leadership of the first Baptist – John the Baptist. They attempt to trace their heritage and origins all the way back to John the Baptist who is believed to be the source of the original true Church – the Baptist Church. Their primary proof is a 56-page booklet titled, "The Trail of Blood," written by J.M. Carroll in 1931.

I have several things that need to be said to those brethren who attempt to trace their historical roots and the origin of the Church back to John Baptist. Allow me to share them with a gracious spirit. First, most Baptist groups do not embrace this teaching since there is no true historical evidence to support it. There is no revealed and reliable Baptist linkage which can be accurately traced back to the blood of John the Baptist. No specific group, whether Baptist or Brethren, possess any legitimate historical evidence, which proves they have *exclusive* blood ties or physical roots to the apostles. Although some (J. M. Carroll) have tried to create the "Trail of Blood" theory, there are no accurate historical records reflecting this, as unbiased historians would agree.

Second, John the Baptist could not be a denominational Baptist since the Church was not yet formed (Matt. 16:18). Third, Jesus could have said, "I will build my Baptist Church" but He refused to make any such distinction (Matt. 16:18). Fourth, neither Paul nor any other writer of Scripture spoke of the Baptist Church (1 Cor. 10:32; James 5:14; 3 John 1:9). This is a significant observation. Fifth, churches formed in New Testament times were identified and named in relationship to their localities (Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:13; Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18, 3:1, 7, 14). There was no such thing as the First Baptist Church of Corinth, the Second Baptist Church of Jerusalem, or the independent Baptist Church of Thessalonica. Why? It's because no such distinctions were made, nor were they intended to be made in the local churches of New Testament times. If the Church was to copy John the Baptist's name surely this would have occurred

during the infant days of the Church. The absence of the Baptist name and all other names is significant.

Sixth, the true Church is not composed of just Baptists, but all born again blood washed saints (Rom. 10:12-13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:13). The original blueprints for the Church were not designed to include only Baptists but all who come to faith in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2 – “with all that in every place call upon the name of the Jesus Christ”). Seventh, those in the Church today have a position and standing which far exceeds that of John the Baptist (Eph. 1:3, 19-23; 2:5). Christians today that belong to the Church have a high, heavenly, and holy position in God's exalted Son which John the Baptist never knew or experienced (Col. 3:1). This means John the Baptist would not be in the position to be head of the Church since he has never experienced the same position and calling that the Church has been given. Eighth, John the Baptist was a forerunner of Christ – not the Baptist Church (Matt. 3:2 – “Prepare ye the way of the Lord” – not prepare the way for the Baptist Church).

Ninth, the doctrinal foundation and original expansion of the Church came about by the teaching of the New Testament “apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:20a) - not the teaching of John the Baptist. It would be strange that the Church would be named after a man who prepared no foundational teaching and guidance for its future. This passage (Eph. 2:20) makes it abundantly clear that John the Baptist belonged to the former dispensation that revolved around kingdom truth. He was actually the last Old Testament prophet attempting to prepare Israel for her Messiah and kingdom (Matt. 3:1-2). This excludes him from being a New Testament prophet. *John was not qualified to be a leader of the Church for the simple reason that he was not a New Testament prophet declaring truth about the Church.* Only the New Testament “apostles and prophets” (there were no Old Testament apostles) were declared to have a foundational ministry in connection with the Church. As the last Old Testament prophet John the Baptist did not have the *message* nor the *credentials* to become a founder of the Church. Instead, the New Testament apostles and prophets are the founders (source and originators) of the Church in the sense that they supplied the Church with its doctrine, practice, and original expansion (Acts 2:42).

Tenth, no specific person is ever termed as being the actual founder or underlying basis for the origin, existence, and survival of the Church, except Jesus Christ, who is called the “chief cornerstone” of the Church (Eph. 2:20b). Only Jesus is the originator, life-giver, and sustainer of the Church. To claim that John the Baptist was the original founder and starting point of the Church goes against the clear teaching of Scripture which clarifies that the Church was founded upon Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the originator of the one true Church which is His body (Col. 1:18). No historical roots were ever provided, nor can they be found, which trace the origins of the Church to one particular man. Why? It’s because Jesus Christ started the Church. Our roots are in Him! He is the commencement of the Church. The Church is Christ’s sovereign plan and His select people (Eph. 3:10) which He brought into existence on the Day of Pentecost. There are some things in the Bible extremely hard do misunderstand!

Eleventh, Jesus is called the “head” (leader and authority) over the Church – not John the Baptist (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18). John the Baptist was never chosen by God to be the original leader or head of the Church. No man, such as a Peter, pope, or John the Baptist, was chosen to be the original leader and authority figure over the entire Church, except Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). Twelfth, John was simply a baptizer – not a denominational Baptist. The term “Baptist” means baptizer (Matt. 3:1; 11:11). *The term was never meant to imply that John or any other person would be associated with the Baptist Church movement.* To come to this conclusion is pure conjecture. Thirteenth, John baptized Jews in view of their preparation and entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 3:2, 8). His baptism had nothing to do with New Testament baptism and the Baptist Church (Matt. 28:19-20). This is a dispensational significance missed by most Baptists who espouse the “trail of blood” theory.

There is a distinct difference between Christian baptism for this age and John's baptism. John’s baptism was for the Jews who were anticipating entrance into the earthly messianic kingdom. Christian baptism is for New Testament believers who want to identify with Christ and the Church. John's baptism has no place in the present dispensation. To equate John the Baptist with modern-day Baptists and the same water baptism that is related to the Church and Great Commission results in total dispensational confusion. It’s interesting

that Apollos wanted to trace his roots and following back to John the Baptist (“knowing only the baptism of John” – Acts 18:25). However, this man was quickly corrected by Aquila and Priscilla and taught the true doctrine of New Testament truth and Christian baptism for this present Church age (Acts 18:24-28). This informs us that John the Baptist had no connection with the Church or understanding of Church truth that is for today. The fact of the matter is this. John the Baptist was totally ignorant of Church truth as set forth by the apostles in the epistles. This being the case, how could the origin and roots of the New Testament Church be linked in succession to a man who was so ignorant of Church truth and who knew nothing about the Church?

In Acts 19:1-7 there was a group of men who, like Apollos, knew only of John's baptism, but who had never been baptized by the Holy Spirit and placed into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). It is interesting that these men were re-baptized. Why? It's because John's baptism was not sufficient for the new Church dispensation. They had to be baptized in the name of Christ and identify with the Church which is His body (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). Thus, instead of a succession from John the Baptist, there needs to be a distinct break from John the Baptist!

Matthew 11:11

"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Let's set things straight. The underlying founder of the Church was Jesus Christ - not John the Baptist. Christ is the Foundation of the Church (1 Cor. 3:11), the Chief Cornerstone of the Church (Eph. 2:20), the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23), the Builder of the Church (Matthew 16:18), and the Rock of the Church (Matthew 16:18). John the Baptist is none of these things. John wanted to *decrease* (John 3:30) but certain Baptist groups want him to *increase*. What we should really desire is that Christ might have first place and preeminence in all things (Col. 1:18).

The question revolving around the origin or beginning of the Church can be easily resolved when we study our Bibles and understand the

dispensational change that occurred on the Day of Pentecost. Pentecost was the birthday of the Church. It was a new beginning, a new people, and a new work of God in the world. How exciting it is to be part of the true Church today which God designed or created to express His infinite wisdom.

Ephesians 3:10

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”