

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## THE CHURCH IN PROPHECY

By David Dann

With regard to the relationship between Christ and the church, the apostle Paul writes, *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body”* (Eph. 5:23). The same apostle also wrote of the church saying, *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling”* (Eph. 4:4). The word translated *“church”* in our English Bibles is the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is derived “from ek, ‘out of,’ and klesis, ‘a calling’” and while it is sometimes used to refer to local groups of saved people assembling and working together in various places, such as the church that was at Antioch, it is also used of “the whole company of the redeemed throughout the present era” (*Vine*, 42). In other words, Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross in order to purchase people, through His blood, who would become part of a called-out body of the saved who are in fellowship with Him.

### The Church Planned

Many people view the church in a negative light, expressing that they want Jesus, but not the church. Others, who have been taught the false doctrine of dispensational premillennialism, view the church as an afterthought, or a stop-gap, that God put in place when Jesus was rejected. But the church has always been an absolutely essential part of the plan of God. Paul writes of *“the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Eph. 3:10-11). Rather than being an afterthought, a stop-gap solution, or something that may be separated from a relationship with Christ, the truth is that the church is a key part of God’s eternal purpose and plan. Since the church has always been a vital part of God’s plan of redemption, we should expect to find that it was prophesied and promised in Scripture before it was present in the world.

### The Church Prophesied

Several centuries before the birth of Jesus, the prophets Isaiah and Micah foretold the establishment of a spiritual house of God (Isa. 2:2-3; cf. Mic. 4:1-2). According to the prophecy, at some later time the word of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem resulting in the establishment of the house of God. While captive in Babylon, about six hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Daniel was allowed by God to interpret the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, in which an image representing four successive world empires, beginning with Babylon and concluding with Rome, was stricken and destroyed by a stone, *“And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth”* (Dan. 2:35). With regard to the fourth empire, which would be Rome, Daniel says, *“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever”* (v. 44). According to the prophecy, during the days of the Roman Empire, God would set up an everlasting kingdom that will never be destroyed. Several hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Joel spoke of a time in the future in which God would call a people to Himself to be saved (Joel 2:28-32). According to the prophecy, by a great miraculous outpouring of power, the Spirit of God would signal the arrival of the day of salvation in which people would be called into a relationship with the Lord for salvation.

### The Church Promised

During His earthly ministry and prior to His death, Jesus responded to Peter’s faithful confession, saying, *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”* (Matt. 16:18-19). In promising to establish His church, Christ makes it clear that the church had not yet been established prior to His death, nor had the

prophecies concerning the church been fulfilled at this point. It is also important to notice that the Lord uses the concepts of the **“church”** and the **“kingdom”** interchangeably in referring to this coming arrangement. Before His death, Jesus promised that His body of saved people would soon come into being. In light of the Old Testament prophecies of the coming kingdom, Jesus spoke to His disciples, saying, **“Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power”** (Mk. 9:1). The arrival of the coming kingdom would not be delayed by thousands of years, but would instead arrive on the scene while His apostles were still living. Before His death, Jesus promised that His kingdom would soon make a powerful entrance into the world. Shortly after His death and resurrection, the Bible says, **“Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high’** (Lk. 24:46-49). Just before His ascension, Jesus promised that people would soon be called into a saved relationship with Him beginning at Jerusalem.

## Conclusion

As a result of the preaching that was done on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit’s power was poured out on the apostles, the Bible says, **“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”** (Acts 2:41, 47b). The prophecies of Isaiah and Micah have been fulfilled in the church, which is composed of those who are **“fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”** (Eph. 2:19). The prophecy of Daniel has been fulfilled, so that Paul could write, **“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”** (Col. 1:13-14). The prophecy of Joel has been fulfilled so that Peter could write to Christians, saying, **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”** (1 Pet. 2:9). Ever since the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the church has been a present reality in this world. God planned, purposed, prophesied, and promised the church as the arrangement in which we can find fellowship and peace with Him. As we consider the wisdom and plan of God, we should be moved to echo the words of the apostle Paul: **“to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen”** (Eph. 3:21). - *Truth Magazine*, January 2020. ■

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## Intolerance

By Greg Gwen

Author John J. Pullen wrote:

*“The word intolerance, in today’s usage, has unjustly come to be considered reprehensible per se. Once this dreadful word is applied to an individual, few people even stop to consider the relative merits or demerits of whatever it is the accused person is accused of being intolerant of. Far from being too much intolerance, we have too little! For if we are to have craftsmanship, we must be intolerant of bungling. If we are to have learning, we must be intolerant of ignorance. If we are to have beauty and poetry, we must be intolerant of vulgarity. If we are to have excellence in anything, we must be intolerant of non-excellence.”*

Pullen’s observations are correct. They apply in science and industry; in education and medicine; and in an hundred other fields of endeavor. They also apply in the realm of religion. There is, perhaps, no other area where men have come to believe so thoroughly in “tolerance.” We are told that we must never condemn another man’s religion. We are warned against ever saying that a certain teaching or practice is wrong or sinful. People, it seems, will tolerate anything but intolerance! Yet, the result of all this “tolerance” is non-excellence in religious service. These days anything goes. All sorts of unauthorized acts are practiced in the name of religion. It is a shame. God is NOT pleased! God’s word speaks of **“pure”** and **“undefiled”** religion (Jas. 1:27). In order to have it, we must be *intolerant* of any departure from God’s holy revealed word. Are you standing firmly for His truth? — *Collegue church of Christ Bulletin*, January 26, 2020. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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