

Email [afairweather1@gmail.com](mailto:afairweather1@gmail.com) for these studies

I would ask all my Students to carefully read each Study and carefully look at all Bible references

## This Study is on the Church Universal –

I use a capital ‘C’ for this **Universal Church**. The word **Universal** is not found in your Bibles, but I use it to describe how all believers **from Pentecost (Acts 2) to the present time**, are in the Church, regardless of denomination. The **local church** will have a small ‘c’ for church. This will help us to distinguish between the two. The **context** in our Bibles tells us if it is a local gathering of the church or if it is the Universal Church, often called ‘*the church of God*’.

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### 1. The Church revealed. Please read Matthew 16:13-20

The Lord Jesus asked His disciples the most important question ever asked: “*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*” The disciples had various answers, but Peter had the right answer: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*”. Our heavenly Father revealed this to Peter, as He does to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour from sin - Read Matthew 11:25-30.

**Peter had been called to follow Jesus** – for He said to them, “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men*” (Matthew 4:19). If we respond to His call, He also has a plan for us, as He did for Peter, and He will also **make** our lives useful to God.

**So we must ask, “Is the Church built on Peter or on Christ?”** The word ‘**Christ**’ means the ‘**Anointed One**’, the ‘**Messiah**’ of the Old Testament. – “*The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us*” (Psalm 2:2-3). So the Heavenly Father revealed to Peter that the Lord Jesus was the promised ‘Christ’, the One Anointed by the Holy Spirit. Peter’s faith now rested in Christ.

Jesus said “*...and you are Peter (Greek ‘Petros’ - meaning ‘a small stone’)...and on this rock (Greek ‘Petra’ - ‘a huge foundation rock’ – Christ Himself) I will build My Church*”. Notice the different meanings for the word ‘**rock**’. The Lord Jesus Christ is the ‘**Rock of Ages**’ on which to build our house of life (1 Peter 2:6-8). Jesus said; “*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock*” (Mat 7:21-29). The storms of life cannot move us from **this foundation**.

**Keys open doors - Peter was given keys** to open the **door of salvation** firstly to the **Jews** (Acts Chapter 2); then to the **Samaritans** (Acts Chapter 8); and then to the **Gentiles** (Acts Chapter 10).

**There are three great divisions of humanity.** The Bible says, “*Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks (Gentiles) or to the church of God*” (1 Cor 10:32). **The Church is formed from both Jew and Gentile. If you are not a Jew, then you are a Gentile, or of the nations. The Church is not built on Peter who denied his Lord three times and was later rebuked by Paul (Galatians Ch. 2), but on Christ Himself. Peter does not hold the keys to heaven – Christ holds these!**

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### 2. The Church and Israel.

In **Study 1** we learnt that the word for ‘**Church**’ is the Greek word ‘**Ekklesia**’ and means ‘**a called-out company, gathering or assembly.**’ Certain Greeks were elected to form the ‘**Ekklesia**’ to manage their city affairs; and so Jesus would call out of all the nations ‘*a people for His name,*’ both Jew and Gentile, to form **His Ekklesia or Church** (Acts 15:14).

**Please note:** The nation of **Israel** was promised the land of Canaan as an **earthly inheritance** conditional on their obedience to the Law of Moses. The **Church** has a **heavenly inheritance**, based on faith alone.

**In contrast to Israel, the Universal Church** is God’s **new creation** that was formed at **Pentecost** fifty days after Christ arose (Acts Chapter 2) and is given a spiritual inheritance in Christ in heavenly places by grace and subject to faith alone (Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Peter 1:3-5). (**Pentecost means fiftieth**).

The Church is the **virgin bride** of Christ and the **body** of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22-23).

Israel is **the adulterous wife** of the Lord, put aside because of her unfaithfulness, yet she will be restored in Christ's coming Kingdom: *"Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the LORD*" (Jeremiah 3:20).

*"For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. "For the LORD has called you Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused," Says your God. "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you. "With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," Says the LORD, your Redeemer."*  
*"For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, So have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you"* (Isaiah 54:5-9).

**For the final scenes describing the saving and restoration of Israel as a people and nation, read Zechariah Chapters 12 to 14 and Romans Chapters 9 to 11. Her future is glorious.**

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### **3. Is the Church under the Law of Moses or under grace alone?**

The Church is not under the Law of Moses, for the Law was given to Israel only. The Church is His new creation and under grace (1 Cor. 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-10), *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17).

The Church is first mentioned by the Lord Jesus, and was **still in the future** when He said, **"I will build My Church"**, He did not say **"I have been building My Church"** (read Matthew 16:13-20). The word 'Church' means *'a called out company'* – called out of the world to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not revealed in the Old Testament. Ephesians 3:3-5 teaches this truth.

**The Church will be raptured** ('caught up' 1 Thess. 4:13-18), then **Israel will be restored spiritually** and will **return to their land** as is taught in Zechariah Chapters 12 to 14 and Romans Chapters 9 to 11.

**So today the Lord is taking from both Jew and Gentiles a people for His name to form His Church.**

**Before He could form the Church, our Lord had to die for the sins of the whole world, be buried in a rock-cut tomb, rise again the third day and ascend back to heaven.**

We warn our students against **'Replacement Theology'** which **denies a national and spiritual salvation** for Israel. They say that the Church is now Israel. Read carefully all the prophets of the Old Testament to see the regathering of Israel and their future great blessing – **and read Zechariah Chapters 12 to 14, Isaiah 54:5-9 and Romans Chapters. 9 to 11.**

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### **When was the Spirit sent to indwell believers?**

Jesus had promised to pray the Father to send the Holy Spirit to dwell **'in'** His disciples. Before this He was **'with'** the disciples (John 7:37-39; 14:15-18).

When Jesus went back to heaven **He prayed the Father**, and so the Church was formed when the Father answered His prayer and sent the Holy Spirit **on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus arose from the grave** (Acts 2). Since that time, all who believe are baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body, the Church (1 Cor. 12:13). The Church is called a body and also a building (Eph. 2:19-22).

We call this Church the **'Universal Church'**. It is composed of believers, both Jew and Gentile, from all around the world. Many are now in heaven, and when Jesus returns as He has promised to do (John 14:1-3), He will then take His people who are still on earth (the Church) home to heaven (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

**Pentecost means 'Fiftieth'**. It was held 50 days after Christ arose from among the dead. It fulfilled the Feasts given to Moses. **All these feasts of the Lord were fulfilled, or will be fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ. Read carefully Leviticus Chapter 23.**

**In later Studies we can look at these Bible teachings so wonderfully fulfilled in Christ.**