



'73 Twenty Ministries
BIBLE STUDIES FOR THE ENTHUSIAST

WHEN DID THE CHURCH BEGIN?

Exploring Theological Perspectives on When the Church Began

73 TWENTY MINISTRIES

A TEACHING MINISTRY OF DR. ROBERT C CROWDER

73TWENTY MINISTRIES: CHARTING THE WORD, NAVIGATING FAITH

Rooted in a lifelong passion for teaching and guiding others in Biblical truth, 73Twenty Ministries is devoted to helping believers navigate the depths of Scripture with both clarity and conviction.

The name 73Twenty holds deep personal significance: it comes from my childhood home at 7320 Greenwood Boulevard in Denver, Colorado. It was here that the foundations of my faith, study, and service were first laid. With the majestic Rocky Mountains ever-present on my horizons, God's Word has been a constant guide and presence throughout my life. The logo of 73Twenty Ministries, with its three mountain peaks in gray, blue, and orange, symbolizes not only the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but also the unwavering foundation of Biblical truth upon which our faith is built.

For more than twenty years, I've served as a pastor, teacher, mentor, and author, committed to making Biblical truths accessible and applicable. Through sermons, Bible studies, books, articles, and other teaching resources, 73Twenty Ministries exists to equip believers, strengthen churches, and proclaim the Gospel. Our mission is both simple and profound: to chart the Word, guiding faith, and helping others anchor their lives in Scripture.

At 73Twenty Ministries, we believe that faithful Biblical study should engage the mind, transform the heart, and shape daily life. Whether through exegetical teaching, character studies, theological exploration, or practical application, every resource is crafted to deepen understanding, strengthen conviction, and encourage obedience to God's Word.

As a ministry grounded in a conservative Baptist, dispensationalist approach, we focus on Biblical exposition, doctrinal clarity, and practical discipleship. We uphold the belief that Scripture is the authoritative, inerrant, and sufficient Word of God, and it's our privilege to help others navigate its timeless truths.

I invite you to explore the resources at 73TwentyMinistries.com and join us on this journey of discovery, growth, and unwavering faith. Together, let's stand on the mountain of God's truths and proclaim His name to every generation.

For His glory alone,

Dr. Robert C. Crowder, Th.D.

Founder, 73Twenty Ministries

WHEN DID THE CHURCH BEGIN?

Differing Views on When the Church Began

The question of when the Church began is a significant topic in ecclesiology, with various theological perspectives offering different interpretations based on biblical and historical evidence. Below are several views on the Church's origin, each supported by Scripture and theological reasoning.

THE CHURCH BEGAN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (COVENANTAL VIEW)

Key Idea: The Church is a continuation of God's people from the Old Testament.

Some theologians believe that the Church existed in some form as early as the Old Testament. This perspective, often held by **Covenant Theology**, asserts that Israel and the Church are part of the same people of God under different administrations of the covenant.

Supportive Passages:

Genesis 12:1-3 – God's covenant with Abraham includes all nations.

Exodus 19:5-6 – Israel is called a "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation."

Romans 9:6-8 – Paul describes the true children of Abraham as those of faith.

Galatians 3:29 – Those who belong to Christ are considered Abraham's offspring.

Arguments:

- Israel was God's assembly (Greek: *ekklesia*), meaning "called-out ones."
- The covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David foreshadowed the Church.
- The New Testament Church is a fulfillment, not a replacement, of Israel.

Major Proponents:

- John Calvin
- Augustine
- Many Reformed Theologians

THE CHURCH BEGAN WITH JESUS' MINISTRY

Key Idea: Jesus founded the Church during His earthly ministry.

Some believe the Church began when Jesus first gathered His disciples and taught about the Kingdom of God.

Supportive Passages:

Matthew 16:18 – “Upon this rock I will build my church (*ekklesia*).”

Matthew 18:17 – Jesus instructs about Church discipline before Pentecost.

John 20:22 – Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on the disciples before Pentecost.

Arguments:

- Jesus personally used the word *ekklesia* to describe His followers.
- The apostles functioned as leaders (Luke 6:13, Mark 3:13-19).
- The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) was the Church’s mission statement.

Major Proponents:

- Some Dispensationalists
- Some Early Church Fathers

THE CHURCH BEGAN AT PENTECOST (DISPENSATIONAL AND TRADITIONAL VIEW)

Key Idea: The Church was officially born when the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost.

A widely held view is that the Church began on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit indwelt believers in fulfillment of Jesus’ promise.

Supportive Passages:

Acts 2:1-4 – The Holy Spirit comes upon the believers.

Acts 11:15-16 – Peter equates the events of Pentecost with the start of the Church.

1 Corinthians 12:13 – Believers are baptized into one body by the Spirit.

Arguments:

- The Church was uniquely empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).
- Pentecost marks the beginning of the Church's mission to the nations.
- Before Pentecost, the disciples were not yet a unified spiritual body.

Major Proponents:

- Classic Dispensationalists (John Darby, C.I. Scofield, Lewis Sperry Chafer)
- Many Evangelicals and Pentecostals

THE CHURCH BEGAN WITH PAUL (ULTRA-DISPENSATIONAL VIEW)

Key Idea: The Church did not truly begin until Paul's ministry.

A minority of scholars argue that the Church began when Paul received the revelation of the "mystery" of the Body of Christ.

Supportive Passages:

Ephesians 3:2-6 – Paul describes the Church as a "mystery" previously unknown.

Colossians 1:25-27 – The mystery is Christ in believers, particularly the Gentiles.

Acts 13:46 – Paul turns his ministry focus to the Gentiles.

Arguments:

- The concept of Jew and Gentile in one unified body was revealed to Paul, not the apostles.
- The early Jerusalem church still followed Jewish customs (Acts 15:1-5).
- Paul calls himself the "minister of the Church" (Colossians 1:25).

Major Proponents:

- Hyper-Dispensationalists (E.W. Bullinger, Charles Welch)

THE CHURCH'S BEGINNING IS ONGOING (KINGDOM THEOLOGY)

Key Idea: The Church is a process that began with Jesus and is still being fulfilled.

Some theologians argue that the Church is not a singular event but a progressive reality that started with Jesus, was empowered at Pentecost, and continues to grow toward fulfillment.

Supportive Passages:

Matthew 13:31-32 – The kingdom is like a mustard seed that grows over time.

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 – Christ’s rule is progressively unfolding.

Revelation 21:2-3 – The ultimate fulfillment of the Church is in the New Jerusalem.

Arguments:

- The Church is still growing, and its full nature will be revealed at Christ’s return.
- The New Testament uses “Church” in multiple ways, sometimes referring to a future fulfillment.
- The Church is both a present and future reality in God’s redemptive plan.

Major Proponents:

- Some Amillennial and Postmillennial Theologians
- Certain Charismatic and Kingdom Theology movements

CONCLUSION: A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

The question of when the Church began depends on one’s theological framework and interpretation of Scripture. Whether it began with Israel, Jesus’ earthly ministry, Pentecost, Paul, or is still being realized, each view contributes to a broader understanding of God’s redemptive work in history.