

Ekklesia

The Origins and Foundation of the Church
(Part I of a V)

"The Church's One Foundation" with Scripture Proofs

The church's one Foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the Word:
From heav'n he came and sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.

Elect from ev'ry nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food.
And to one hope she presses,
With ev'ry grace endued.

The church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord to defend,
To guide, sustain and cherish
Is with her to the end;
Though there be those that hate her,
And false sons in her pale,
Against or foe or traitor
She ever shall prevail.

Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS Christ." (1Co 3:11)

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

"Even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it." (Eph 5:25-26)

"The Church of God which He purchased with His Own Blood." (Acts 20:28)

"Out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." (Rev 5:9)

"We being many are one Bread and one Body." (1Co 10:17)

"One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism." (Eph 4:5)

"There is none other Name under Heaven...whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"We all are partakers of that one Bread." (1Co 10:17b)

"Called in one hope of our calling." (Eph 4:4)

"...grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Eph 4:7)

"Upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt 16:18)

"Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." (Matt 28:20)

"Marvel not if the world hate you." (1Jn 3:13)

"False brethren." (Gal 2:4)

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I fall I shall arise." (Micah 7:8)

"By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2Pe 2:2)

"I hear that there be divisions among you." (1Co 11:18)

By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
With the God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won:
With all her sons and daughters
Who, by the Master's Hand
Led through the deathly waters,
Repose in Eden-land.

O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with thee.
There, past the border mountains,
Where in sweet vales the Bride
With Thee by living fountains
For ever shall abide!

"Watch unto prayer." (1Pe 4:7)

"Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." (Ps 25:22)

"Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting..." (Rom 8:23)

"The redeemed of the Lord...shall come with singing unto Zion." (Isa 51:11)

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and against powers," etc. (Eph 6:12)

"In all these things we are more than conquerors." (Rom 8:37)

"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom 16:20)

"We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1Jn 3:2)

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." (Heb 4:9)

"Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son JESUS Christ." (1Jn 1:3)

"...the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you." (2Co 13:14)

"Ye are come unto the heavenly Jerusalem and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn...and to the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb 12:22-23)

"When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee." (Isa 43:2)

"...with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)

"Faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24)

"Humble yourselves...that He may exalt you in due time." (1Pe 5:6)

"He carried me...to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the Holy Jerusalem." (Rev 21:10)

"The Lamb...shall lead them unto the living fountains of waters." (Rev 7:17)

"The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them." (Rev 21:3)

The Fellowship is Breaking

As Saruman secretly unleashes his Uruk-hai upon the unsuspecting Fellowship of the Ring, Legolas begins to grow uneasy. “It is not the eastern shore that worries me,” he tells Aragorn. “A shadow and a threat have been growing in my mind. Something draws near, I can feel it.” I’m no Legolas, and I’m not on my way to destroy a magically enchanted ring in the fires of Mount Doom. But I am *part of a Fellowship. It’s called Christ’s church*, both this local body of believers, and the one scattered around our city, our country, and our planet. And like Legolas, I too have been growing uneasy about a dark threat that is just beyond sight in the woods on the eastern shore which threatens the very existence of our Fellowship.

Perhaps no other time in the last 2,000 years have we seen quite the threat that is now poisoning itself in the darkness out of view. Make no mistake, there have always been problems and enemies—like the Uruk-hai—and *we will get to that in due time*. But I have increasingly grown burdened by an apathy, an indifference, an ignorance, an unguardedness, in some places an hostility toward the church, not from enemies without, but *from friends within*. What Legolas and

the others did not understand as they so carefully watched those shores for other enemies, was that the power and seduction of the ring would go after them too. They were not immune. “**The Fellowship is breaking,**” Galadriel warned Frodo. “**It is already begun. He will try to take the Ring. You know of whom I speak. One by one, it will destroy them all.**” And as they crossed that very shore, Boromir the valiant and faithful had been seduced and sought to take the ring from Frodo.

I’ve decided to take a short break from our study of Luke to enter into a five-week series during **Reformation month** which culminates this year in a fifth-Sunday which then takes us into both Halloween—that day of darkness when the veil between the worlds is at its thinnest, and that same day on which Martin Luther decided, not coincidentally, to nail his 95 Thesis to the church door at Wittenberg, Germany in an attempt to reform *the church*.

In my initial attempt to find **fodder for the opening** of this series, I went to Google and typed in “**anti church mentality,**” wondering what I would find. Knowing, of course, that Google has deliberately suppressed certain websites and elevated others for culturally subversive and deeply political purposes, I was nevertheless fascinated to see the results.

First came the Wiki “[Anti-Christian sentiment.](#)” Then, “[Avoiding an iChurch Mentality.](#)” This was followed by “[A Response To Christians Who Are Done With Church.](#)” That was one I was very interested in. Others included, “[Why are Christians so mean?](#)” “[5 Signs Your Church May Be Going ‘Woke,’](#)” “[Anti-Intellectualism in the Church,](#)” “[How to Know You’re in a Christian Fundamentalist Church,](#)” “[How Politics Poisoned the Evangelical Church,](#)” “[The Trouble with ‘Sunday School’ Answers,](#)” “[There’s no sharp distinction between cult and regular religion,](#)” “[Psychology vs. Christianity,](#)” “[What’s So Dangerous About the Emerging Church,](#)” “[Religion as a Weapon of War,](#)” “[Why I No Longer Identify as a Conservative Christian,](#)” and more.

In these titles, you can hear many problems that could take us down almost infinite numbers of rabbit holes. But many of them get at the thinking behind the threat. While some people want to, but are extremely frustrated that they cannot find a good local church to go to (and this is a profoundly difficult problem in its own right), I think it is fair to say that [many people](#)—people who identify as Christians—are simply suspicious of the very idea of church in the first place. They don’t like church. They don’t want to go

to church. They've been hurt by church. They don't see the importance of church. They don't care about church. They have no idea what church is or why it matters. They find the very idea antiquated or pointless or irrelevant. They have many reasons, many of them valid, many of them invalid.

But it is troubling to me, because **we Christians have become perhaps the greatest threat of all to the church.** We have been seduced by the power of the ring—the culture around us that tells us how hypocritical, how abusive, how power-hungry, how shallow, how harmful, how man-made, how “religious,” how political, how judgmental, out-of-touch the very idea of church is, let alone almost all actual churches are. And now, in less than a generation, we are seeing what were once the most church-oriented of all nations move to absolute total secularism. Our churches are empty. But it isn't just secularism in terms of church attendance. No, this new generation has **not adopted an atheist mentality, but a profoundly spiritual one.** A spirituality that despises creed, hates organized religion, loathes any kind of mutual accountability, and wants only to worship God at the Church of One.

We are not going to spend our time thinking about everything that is wrong with the church and then find solutions. That might only make matters worse, because at this point there are so many problems, that focusing on them could actually backfire and reinforce the very reasons people give for justifying their opposition to it. Rather, I want to put forth **a positive vision** of the church.

A few years ago, I spent much of one sermon going through a famous song on the church.¹ In these five weeks, I will go back to it from time to time as it lends itself to a bit more systematic study. A song I've been singing since childhood, I've long been amazed at its **incredible depth and breadth of teaching**. And this is precisely what the Apostle says is a main purpose of church music, "*Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*" (**Col 3:16**). Let me tell you about it.

In 1866 a little book was published called *Lyra Fidelium* [Lyre of the Faithful].² A lyre is a musical instrument, and the subject of the book was discussed in the subtitle: *Twelve Hymns on the Twelve Articles of the Apostle's Creed*. **Samuel**

¹ See **Douglas Van Dorn**, "The Bride of Christ: A Sermon on the Church (Rev 21:9-22:17)," *RBCNC* (10-17-21),

https://www.rbcnc.com/_files/ugd/90a441_7953518919c544759fc31c82ebf0835c.pdf.

² **S. J. Stone**, *Lyra Fidelium: Twelve Hymns on The Twelve Articles of the Apostle's Creed* (Oxford: Messrs. Parker and Co., 1866).

Stone, an Anglican priest, wrote his hymns as a response to a serious theological controversy that was brewing in his church down in South Africa. The opponent was teaching that “much of the Old Testament was mythology, and that Jesus had taught wrong things about Moses.”³ Stone believed that the very core of Christianity was at stake, and thus he attempted to counter the heresy in a pastoral, devotional, and catechetical manner—through hymns that explicated *The Apostle’s Creed* in a form of writing that would touch both the head and the heart.

The most famous of these poems deals specifically with Article Nine of the Creed: “(I believe in) the Holy Catholic [Universal] Church: The Communion of Saints.” It is based in 1 Corinthians 3:11, “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Hence, the title: “The Church’s One Foundation.” Most hymnals contain either four or five stanzas in the song. However, the poem originally contained seven. The book is laid out so that you can read the poem on one side and the biblical passages that inspired each line are on the opposite page. Each stanza is composed of lyrics that contain new fewer than four biblical allusions and one has as many as seven (see above). And

³ John Gardner, “Hymnology: The Church’s One Foundation,” *Faith Bible Church* (Jan 8, 2020), <https://fbchurch.org/resource/hymnology-the-churchs-one-foundation>.

these are just the Bible passages that Stone cites, and he could well have chosen many other parallel passages.

For whatever reason, of all the poems in this little book, **this one became the most popular**, perhaps due in part to **the music** that it is now inextricably linked to, a tune called *Aurelia* (meaning “golden”) written two years earlier by Samuel S. Wesley. Originally set to be the music to a song called “**Jerusalem the Golden**,” that song (trans. by **J. M. Neale**), ironically, was from the three-thousand line poem called, “*De Contemptu Mundi*” (“The Contemptable World”) written in the twelfth-century (1145) by **Bernard of Cluny**, a monk from France who used intricate hexameter rhyme scheme to “**satirize the evils of his culture, as well as those of the church and his own monastery.**”⁴ To put his poem in sharp relief, he began by focusing on the **glories of heaven** to then describe the perversions we men have made of God’s earth and his church. Some things never change. Curiously, both of these songs have in them the idea of the new creation

⁴ *Psalter Hymnal Handbook*, “Jerusalem the Golden,” *Hymnary.org*. https://hymnary.org/text/jerusalem_the_golden_with_milk_and_honey. One line of the poem says it all, “**These are the last days, the worst of times: let us keep watch. Behold the menacing arrival of the supreme Judge. He is coming, he is coming to end evil, crown the just, reward the right, set the worried free, and give the skies.**” **Going Deeper**. Other parts of Bernard’s poem were translated by Neale into other songs that also fit the same tune. Among them are “**The World is Very Evil**,” “**Brief Life Is Here Our Portion**,” and “**For Thee, O Dear, Dear Country**.” For the full translation see **J. M. Neale**, *The Rhythm of Bernard de Morlair Monk of Cluny on the Celestial Country*, fifth ed. (London: Hayes: 1864).

and the church and so could easily be sung together. At any rate, the song became popular and still more than twenty years after it first appeared, one account indicates that it was sung with such vigor by such a large congregation that “some people say this hymn was really more than they could bear. It made them feel weak at the knees, their legs trembled, and they really felt as though they were going to collapse.”⁵

The **first verse** of the song teaches, “**The church’s one Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.** This is what we are going to focus on today: **the foundation** of the church from stanza one. But to do this right, we will need to go beyond the lyrics of this amazing poem and do some deep investigation into **the origins** of the church. My aim in doing this is to impress upon you something Edmund Clowney says in his discussion of the church in relation to the Apostle’s Creed.⁶ “**I believe in ... the church.**” **The church is a matter of faith.** And

⁵ **Welsey Milgate** and D’Arcy Wood. *A Companion to Together in Song* (Sydney: Australian Hymnbook Pty Ltd, 2006), 335. On this history of the song see **C. Michael Hawn**, “History of Hymns: ‘The Church’s One Foundation,’” *Discipleship Ministries* (July 18, 2017), <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-the-churchs-one-foundation>.

⁶ “**Is the church to be believed? The Apostles’ Creed does not confess that we believe in the church in the same way that we believe in God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Yet we do believe the holy catholic church; the church itself is a matter of Christian faith.**” **Edmund P. Clowney**, *The Church*, ed. Gerald Bray, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 71. We will return to this later.

as such, it is that which a Christian must see with their spiritual eyes. But the only way you can do that is to have the Word of God tell you by the Spirit the glorious truths of this great mystery: the church.

The Mystery

It is in this idea of “mystery” that I want to begin our thinking, because it is right here that I think we have a fountainhead of so much bad thinking, thinking that started off—in their minds—as good and right, but which has turned sour over time into many bad ideas about the church. It is thinking that has created a massive unpassable chasm, like that between the rich man and Lazarus in Jesus’ story. That chasm is this gaping divide between the Old Testament and the New Testament which has been responsible for so much theological mischief and trickery.

In what is the densest population of the word “mystery” found in the New Testament, Ephesians 3:4-9 uses the word four times. The idea of the church is found several times in the immediate context (esp. vs. 6, 10). Thus, we read some people saying things like this, “According to Ephesians 3 ... nothing about the mystery and the new creation, the body

of Christ, was ever revealed before,”⁷ or “Paul calls the Church a “Mystery” because it was not known to the Old Testament Patriarchs and Prophets,”⁸ or these are “truths not included in the Old Testament.”⁹ These views have made their way into the popular culture so much so that people today think that the church was this completely brand new thing that poofed into existence *ex nihilo*. And when we divorce such a teaching so completely from the OT, thus making the OT virtually irrelevant to us on the subject, it isn’t that far of a stretch to start doing that with the NT as well, and that’s how you get people today not caring about the church. It isn’t necessarily a logical leap, but one of emulation. If we really don’t need 39 of those books to teach us about the church, then why would we really need the other 27?

Here is what the Apostle says specifically. He speaks of “the mystery ... made known to me by revelation” (3:3). This one is important because in the same verse he adds that he had already “written briefly” about it. And what did he say before? He called it “the mystery of [God’s] will” (1:9), not

⁷ Bob Hill, “The Twelve Dispensations,” *TOL* (March 5, 2002), <http://theologyonline.com/showthread.php?1653-ARCHIVE-The-Twelve-Dispensations-By-Bob-Hill>.

⁸ Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth, or “God’s Plan and Purpose in the Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: Clarence Larkin, 1918), 147.

⁹ Thomas Ice, “Mysteries,” *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy*, ed. Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004), 238.

the church itself, but God's *plans for it*. He goes on to talk about "mystery of Christ" (4), the "mystery that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body" (6), and again, "the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God" (9). I'll come back to what this plan is, exactly, later. Because it is a glorious truth that should cause every single self-professing Christian to jump as quickly as they can to a good local church to begin working towards the end of being part of it.

I Will Build My Church: Origins of the Ekklesia

For now, I want to look for a little bit at something I never once heard from anyone in these circles that taught the OT never said anything at all about the church. We must begin, however, in Matthew 16. It is the famous saying that Jesus tells Peter near the entrance to the cave of Pan near the Temples of Augustus and Zeus at Caesarea Philippi at the foot of Mt. Hermon. Jesus famously says, "I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and that gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). What many people believe is new here is the term "church." They seem to be of the opinion that the new thing is therefore the church. But this is profoundly incorrect.

Jesus **deliberately chose a word** packed with OT meaning and context. Now, it wasn't in the original Hebrew, of course. **Ekklesia**, the word used here, is a Greek term. However, when the seventy translators of the OT into Greek (LXX) needed to find a word to translate the Hebrew *qhl*, a word that means “**to assemble**” or “**to summon**” or “**to call**,” they chose *ekklēsia*, from *ek* (“**out of**”) and *kaleō* (“**to call**”). **An ekklesia is literally a called-out group that assembles together because they are summoned to do so.** The word perfectly fit an idea found throughout the OT *for Israel*, and that's why they used it.

For example, it's first use comes in **Deuteronomy 4:10**, “**on the day of the ekklesia.**”¹⁰ Here, God **commanded Moses** to “**gather the people before me.**” They were **summoned**. It is here that God covenanted with Israel (**5:2**). Later, this day will simply be called “**the day of the ekklesia**” (**9:10; 18:16**). It was a day set apart for **sacred assembly and worship and official business**. It had rules about who could or could not attend, who was to do what, what was supposed to be done on it, and so on.

This **continues** with Joshua. When **Joshua** assembles the people on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim to read the blessings and curses, it was done “**in the hearing of all of the ekklesia**”

¹⁰ In what follows, I'm using the excellent short survey of all the uses of *ekklēsia* in the LXX by **Kyle Pope**, “[The Use of the Word Ekklesia in the Greek Old Testament](http://olsenpark.com),” olsenpark.com.

of Israel.” From here on out, let’s substitute the word “church,” since that’s the English word we’ve used with Jesus and Peter. This will have a more profound impact on our hearing and thinking. In the days of the Judges, when the concubine was killed and all the Israelites gathered together do decide what to do, they were called “the church of the people of God” (Jdg 20:2). Anyone who would not come up to the church was to be put to death (Jdg 21:5).

When David speaks to Goliath, he declares that “all this church shall know ... that the battle is the Lord’s” (1Sam 17:47 [LXX 1Kgs 17:47]). Before David brings the ark from Kir-iath-jearim, he speaks “to all the church of Israel” (1Chr 13:2, 4). When he announces that Solomon will build the temple, he does so “in the midst of the church” (1Chr 28:2). When Solomon finished building the temple, he blessed “the church” (1Kg 8:14, 22, 55 [LXX 3Kg 18:14, 22]; 2Chr 6:3). On this day, the church feasted for seven days (1Kg 8:65 [LXX 3Kg 8:65]; 2Chr 7:8).

In the days of Jehoshaphat, he stands “in the church of Judah” in prayer to God (2Chr 20:5). When Hezekiah restores sound worship, the church laid their hands on the male goats of the sin offering (2Chr 29:23). When the prophet Joel urges Israel to repent, he tells them to consecrate the church (Joel 2:16).

When Babylon conquers Jerusalem and the temple of destroyed, **Jeremiah** says that those whom God had commanded not to enter had come “into your [God’s] church” (**Lam 1:10**). Here, the term even seems to refer to the building.

We find *ekklesia* being used throughout the books of poetry. **Job** says, “I have stood in the church crying” (**Job 30:28**), which is very interesting, since he predates the nation of Israel. Perhaps the most important poetic use of the term is found in **Psalm 22:22**. “In the midst of the church I will praise you.” This is so important because Hebrews quotes this passage directly, right down to the term *ekklesia*. Amazingly, and bewilderingly to me, the Lexham English LXX and the older Brenton English LXX only translate *ekklesia* a single time as “church” between the two of them. It is here, in Brenton’s translation of the Psalm. Perhaps even more disconcerting, almost all modern English translations of **Hebrews 2:12**, where this psalm is quoted, refuse to translate it as “church” as well.¹¹ To get “church” as a translation, you have to go back to the Geneva Bible and KJV.

Does this not betray a presupposition that what we find in the OT is *not* in fact the church at all, but merely a generic assembly? This is troubling, to say the least, because the vast

¹¹ This includes the ESV, NKJV, RSV, NAS, NIV, (“congregation”), YLT, ASV, NET, NLT (“assembly”).

majority of times that the word appears in the OT, it describes a body of people **summoned** together before God, **called out** by him, **assembling** to worship him, to appeal to him, to repent to him, to stand together before him. To put it differently, it is *his* church. He made it. He created it. He calls it. It exists by and for him. And, Hebrews, in quoting the psalm and applying it directly to the NT church audience to whom the letter is written, is showing that there is **a profound continuity between the OT and NT church**. To quote Psalm 22 of the church in the NT is to directly link the church in the Psalm to that in Hebrews.

This is why we find in, including *ekklesia*, **at least a dozen phrases** the NT taken straight from the OT, which are used to describe the people of Israel, being applied by the Apostle's to the church. They include the *circumcision*, *a kingdom of priests* and *a holy nation*, *Jews*, *the Israel of God*, *sons of Abraham*, *the vine*, *the chosen people*, *God's temple*, *the tribes of Israel*, *the new Jerusalem*, and *the bride*.

Term or Phrase	OT	NT
<i>Ekklesia</i> (church)	Deut 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:2-4; 31:30; etc.	Matt 16:18; Rom 1:1; etc.
The circumcision	Gen 17:10	Php 3:3 ¹²

¹² “We are *the circumcision*, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”

A kingdom of priests and a holy nation	Ex 19:6	Rev 1:6; 5:9-10; 1Pe 2:9 ¹³
Jews	Gen 29:35; Ezra 4:12	Rom 2:29 ¹⁴
The Israel of God	Gen 32:28; Ex 1:7	Rom 9:6, 26; Gal 6:16 ¹⁵
Sons of Abraham	Gen 17:5	Rom 4:16 ¹⁶
The Vine	Hosea 10:1	Rom 11:13-17 ¹⁷
Chosen People	Isaiah 43:20	1Pe 1:9 ¹⁸
God's Temple	1Kg 12:27	1Pe 2:5; 1Co 3:16; Eph 2:21 ¹⁹
Tribes of Israel	Gen 49:28	Rev 7:4-8, 14:1-3 ²⁰

¹³ “You have made them *a kingdom and priests* to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10); “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1Pe 2:9); “You shall be to me *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*” (Exod 19:6).

¹⁴ “But *a Jew* is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise [a play on the name Judah] is not from man but from God” (Rom 2:29); “And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘This time I will *praise* the Lord.’ Therefore she called his name *Judah*” (Gen 29:35); “Be it known to the king that *the Jews* who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem” (Ezra 4:12).

¹⁵ “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but *Israel*” (Gen 32:28); “But the people of *Israel* were fruitful and increased greatly” (Ex 1:7); “And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon *the Israel of God*” (Gal 6:16); “Not all who are descended from Israel are *Israel* .. Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people’” (Rom 9:6, 25).

¹⁶ “... not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of *Abraham*, who is *the father* of us all” (Rom 4:16); “No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations” (Gen 17:5).

¹⁷ “If some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree ...” (Rom 11:18); “Israel is a luxuriant vine” (Hos 10:1).

¹⁸ “You are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession” (Deut 7:6); “I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people” (Isa 43:20); “But you are a chosen race” (1Pe 2:9).

¹⁹ “If *this people* go up to offer sacrifices in *the temple* of the Lord at Jerusalem...” (1Kg 12:27). “Do you not know that you are *God's temple* and that God's Spirit dwells in you?” (1Co 3:16); “In whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into *a holy temple* in the Lord” (Eph 2:21); “You yourselves like living stones are being built up as *a spiritual house*” (1Pe 2:5). It is this idea of God's temple that we then find several other statements in the NT about how we offer our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1-2; Heb 13:16), offer prayers on incense (Rev 5:8), drink the offerings of suffering (Php 2:17); offer fragrant offerings of money (2Cor 2:14-16); offer the fragrant aroma of the gospel ministry (2Cor 2:14-15); proclaim the priestly gospel (Rom 15:16), etc.

²⁰ “And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the

The new Jerusalem	Ps 116:19	Rev 21:2 ²¹
The Bride	Jer 3:8; Song of Solomon	Eph 5:25; Rev 21:2 ²²

The Church's One Foundation

So are they exactly the same? Of course not. No one has ever suggested that. But they are **organically related** to one another, as the oak tree is to the acorn, as the butterfly is to the caterpillar, as the pot is to the clay from which it is taken.

Most important of all in this regard is **the churches one foundation**. As the song says, it “**is Jesus Christ her Lord.**” We’ll look at what the song called “**his new creation by water and the word**” in a moment. But first, you must see that the churches one foundation in the OT is the same Person—the one our Lord’s half-brother **Jude** calls “Jesus” in the OT. It is Jesus’ church. That’s what he tells Peter. He made it. He called it. It is through him and for him.

tribe of Manasseh, 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed” (Rev 7:4-8); “Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth” (Rev 14:1-3). “All these are *the twelve tribes* of Israel” (Gen 49:28).

²¹ “And I saw the holy city, *new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God” (Rev 21:2); “In the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, *O Jerusalem*. Praise the Lord!” (Ps 116:19).

²² “Prepared as *a bride* adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2); “This is profound, and I am saying that it [a husband and wife] refers to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). “I had sent her away with a decree of *divorce*” (Jer 3:8; cf. Isa 50:1).

In an amazing verse, Jude says, “Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that *Jesus*, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe” (Jude 5). Similarly, Paul says, “We must not put *Christ* to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer” (1Cor 11:9-10). How can they make such fantastic claims that *Jesus Christ was there with the people*, saving them and guiding them in the wilderness? It is because Jesus did not come into existence in the womb of the Virgin. Rather, he has always existed. He is the Firstborn, and by him all things were made (Col 1:16). What was new in the NT, in the womb of Mary, was that he incarnated as a human being. But he was there, in the OT—personally present with his people.

The Angel of the LORD says to Abraham, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for *now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me*” (Gen 22:12). In this verse, God is distinct from the Angel, and yet God is the Angel. You did not withhold your son from *me*. Jacob recalls this same being saying, “*The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to*

this day, *the angel* who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys” (Gen 48:15-16). Athanasius said of this verse, “None of created and natural Angels did [Jacob] join to God their Creator ... but in saying, ‘Who delivered me from all evil,’ he showed that it was no created Angel, but the Word of God, whom he joined to the Father in his prayer, through whom, whomsoever He will, God does deliver” (Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians* 3.12).²³ Many before and after him have agreed.²⁴

And why? Listen to what the Angel himself tells Israel. “Now *the angel of the Lord* went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, ‘I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you” (Jdg 2:1-3). Don’t you see? The Angel is the God who covenanted with Israel. He is the God who

²³ Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373), “Four Discourses against the Arians” 3.12, in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. John Henry Newman and Archibald T. Robertson, vol. 4, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1892), 400.

²⁴ See Peter Allix, *A Dissertation Concerning The Angel Who is Called the Redeemer*, ed. Douglas Van Dorn (Dacono: Waters of Creation, 2020), 51-76.

called them to himself, gave them the law, taught them to worship, assembled them at Mt. Sinai, led them in the wilderness, was the water from the rock, and the manna from heaven. He was therefore the foundation of the church in the OT too. Same foundation. The church's one foundation is *always* Jesus Christ her Lord, no matter the time or place. That's a powerful word that people must hear. This is not something that is optional if it is all about Jesus.

But the promise was, says Malachi taking parts of **Judges 2** and **Isaiah 40:1** and **Exodus 23**, that the Angel would come in the future in *a new* way. "The angel (*malak; aggelos*) of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts" (**Mal 3:1**). And that was Isaiah's prediction as well. "His name is called Angel of the Great Council" (**Isa 9:6 LXX**).

The Origin of Malachi 3

Ex 23:20-21	Isa 40:3; Jdg 2:1ff	Mal 3:1
"Behold, I send an angel (malak; aggelos) before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.	A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isa 40:3)	"Behold, I send my messenger (malak; aggelos), and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple;

<p>²¹ Pay careful attention to him [malak; aggelos] and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him.</p>	<p>Now the angel (malak; aggelos) of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? (Jdg 2:1-2)</p>	<p>and the messenger (malak; aggelos) of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.</p>
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Malachi had said in that same verse that before him would go **another messenger** who would “**prepare the way before me, and the Lord will suddenly come to his temple.**” This is what happened, says **Matthew**, when John the Baptist came. “**The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord’**” (**Matt 3:3**). This is what happened, says **Mark**, “**Before, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way**” (**Mark 1:2**). This is what happened, says **Luke**, “**And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways ... as it is written**” (**Luke 1:76; 3:4**). This is why Jesus is the one foundation of the church in the NT. It is because he was its one foundation in the Old. Same Jesus. Same Foundation. Same God. It is his church.

The Mystery Revealed *at Mt. Hermon*

So, if the church and the foundation are not what is new, then **what is?** If the foundation and church are not the mystery because they've always been known and understood, then what is Paul talking about in Ephesians 3? He tells you. It is not *that* the church exists or is somehow came into being for the first time in the NT. But rather that **through the church**, a thing of heavenly origin, a proclamation of the gospel (**Eph 3:6**) through faith in Christ (**12**), the Gentiles are now fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the same promises (**6**). This is the remarkable truth that should make all Christians not flee from the church, but to her. For here there is safety; here there is victory; here there is Christ himself. This mystery is made known “**to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit**” (**5**) and “**to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places**” (**10**). And I believe that the Apostle gets this from Jesus' words there to Peter at **the bottom of Mt. Hermon** and then from the transfiguration event **at the top** just a few days later.

What do I mean? Let's go back to Jesus' words to Peter.²⁵ Something truly remarkable is going on here. Christians

²⁵ For much more on what follows see **Douglas Van Dorn**, “[Luke 9:18-36: A Declaration of War, the Confession of Peter and the Transfiguration](#),” *RBCNC* (6-4-2023).

Ephesians 3:1-13 (ESV) in Parallel²⁶

3:1	<i>Inclusio:</i> For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles-		
3:2	Assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,	3:7	Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace,
		3:8	which was given to me according to the working of His power. (8) To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given,
			to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
3:3 3:4	how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. (4) When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,	3:9	and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery
3:5	Which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations		hidden in God, who created all things,
	as it has now been revealed	3:10	so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
	To his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.		
3:6	This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.	3:11 3:12	This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, (12) in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.
3:13	<i>Inclusio:</i> So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.		

²⁶ Adapted from [ljhooge](https://biblicalchiasmus.wordpress.com/2010/11/20/786/), "Ephesians 3:1-13 – Heirs, Members, Partakers," *Biblical Chiasmus* (Nov 20, 2010), <https://biblicalchiasmus.wordpress.com/2010/11/20/786/>. This chart demonstrates that to interpret the passage correctly, one must recognize that parallels that exist throughout vv. 1-13. When we do this, it becomes immediately apparent that it is *not the church* that is the mystery, but the proclamation through the church (vs. 10) of this mystery of the Gentiles now making up one people of God that is the mystery. Ironically, this is the very thing that those who think the church is the mystery often deny when they say that God has "two peoples" (Jews and the church).

have long fought over what Jesus meant when he talked about “[the rock](#).” “[Upon this rock](#).” What rock? Rather than see an either/or logical fallacy, I believe we have a beautiful and almost unparalleled [quadruple entendre](#),²⁷ (1) the rock (*petra*) plays off of [Peter’s name](#): *Petros*. So, there’s the Apostle being given the mystery, as Paul says ([Eph 3:5](#)). The church is founded on the Apostolic historical reality of history. (2) It also plays off his [confession of faith](#)—that he is the Christ, the son of the living God ([Matt 16:16](#)). There’s the faith that Paul talked about ([Eph 3:13](#)). The church is necessarily about creed and confession. (3) But [Christ is himself the Rock](#) of the OT ([Deut 32:4, 15; Ps 18:2; Isa 17:10](#); etc.). As Paul says, “[The Rock was Christ](#)” ([1Cor 11:4](#)). And Paul said as much that the mystery came through the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel ([Eph 3:12](#)). (4) And then there’s [the literal rock](#) upon which Jesus is standing there at the entrance to the cave of Pan—the rock at Caesarea Philippi, Mt. Hermon. This is what Paul is talking about when he says that the mystery is made known not only to the Apostles like Peter, but [to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places](#) ([10](#)). Jesus didn’t say this in a secret closet, but right there where Pan and other evil

²⁷ In my sermon on [Luke 9:18-36](#) I showed that I’ve only ever seen one other quadruple entendre, the album title and cover of Rush’s Moving Pictures record. See this sermon for a much fuller explication of what follows.

entities were busy, most likely during the evil Lupercalia festival of the city, creating evil worship for themselves. You don't think they heard what Jesus said too?

But it isn't just here at *the bottom* of the mountain that we find this all happening. It also happens *at the top of Mt. Hermon* at *the Transfiguration* event just a few days later. And it happens, as Psalm 89 says, according to prophecy. Along with its sister psalm (88), this song, written *by an Ezrahite*, which scholars say was *a Canaanite* who had converted to worship the True God,²⁸ there are over 20 direct verbal parallels between these two songs and these two short stories found in the Gospels.

Following Luke's Order of Feeding the 5,000, the Confession of Peter, the Transfiguration		
Matt/Luke	Psalm 89: Ezrahite (Canaanite?)	Psalm 87-88 (Ezrahite-88:1)
Build (Mt 16:18)	Build (4)	
Rock (Mt 16:18)	Rock (26)	
Christ (Mt 16:16; Lk 9:20)	Anointed (20, 38, 51)	
Gates of Hades (Mt 16:18)	Power of Sheol (48)	Gates of Zion (87:2)
Keys of Kingdom (Mt 16:19)	Davidic Throne (20, 35-36)	
Church (<i>ekklesia</i>) (Mt 16:18)	Assembly (<i>ekklesia</i> , 5)	
Son of God (Mt. 16:16)	Firstborn (27)	
Father in Heaven (Mt 16:17)	Father, El Rock of Salvation (26) El in Council (7)	

²⁸ See [Phillip E. McMillion](#), "Ezrahite," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 742; [Claude F. Mariottini](#), "Ethan (Person)," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 644.

High/"The" Mt (Mt. Hermon) (Mt 17:1; Lk 9:28)	Sons of God in heavenlies (6; 37)	
	Divine Council (7)	
Bar-Jonah (Mt 16:17)	Rahab (10)	Rahab and Gentiles (87:4)
Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13) ("Rock" Hermon) (Mt 16:18)	North and Hermon (12), Rock (26)	Holy mount [Zion] (87:1)
Parentalia/Lupercalia	Festal shout or war cry (15)	
Face did shine (Mt 17:2)	Light of your face (15)	
Dth/Rsrctn (Mt 16:21; Lk 9:22)	Crush his foes (23)	
This is my b. Son (Mt 17:6) My chosen one (Lk 9:35)	Testimony (20ff) Chosen one (19)	
Moses/Elijah (Mt 17:4; Lk 9:33) (gods of the council)	Witness (moon; 37)	
Cloud (Mt. 17:5; Lk 9:34)	Witness in <i>clouds</i> faithful (37)	
Cave of Pan (this rock)		My springs are in you (87:7)
Son of man suffer (Lk 9:22)		Life near Sheol (88:3-5) Waves (88:7)
Killed (Lk 9:22)		Regions of dark deep (88:6)
Parentalia/Lupercalia		Rephaim (88:10) Grave/Abaddon (88:11)

These parallels are clearly presented as **prophecy**, a prophecy of **the new covenant**. For example, “*I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him*” (**Ps 89:27-28**).

It is into this that we need to understand a couple of relevant facts about the Psalm and the church. First, **ekklesia** appears in **vs. 5**. Second, it does so in the context of the **rulers and authorities in heavenly places**, just like Ephesians 3 tells us. “**The heavens shall declare thy wonders, O Lord; and thy**

truth in the church [*ekklesia*] of the holy ones” (Ps 89:5). It goes on, “For who in the heavens shall be compared to the Lord? and who shall be likened to the Lord among the sons of God?” (6). The point seems to be exactly what Paul is saying in Ephesians. In and through the church—this heavenly entity, the wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places according to the eternal purpose that God has realized in Christ through our faith in him. Long ago Theodoret said, “All who put their trust in [God, i.e. the church] will keep faith with [him] ... It is proper [therefore] for your praises to be sung by all, not least by the inhabitants of heaven, who look down on your wonders more precisely and understand the reliability of your promises.”²⁹

(Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on Psalm 89*)

When the church presents the Gospel of what Jesus has done for us, it is doing its most fundamental job, and the heavens themselves bear witness and worship.

But the context of both the Psalm and Ephesians seems to be more than willing praise from these creatures. Rather, it

²⁹ Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms: Psalms 73–150*, ed. Thomas P. Halton, trans. Robert C. Hill, vol. 102, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 87.

seems to be that God is making this known to the fallen heavenly beings, and they must praise him too. *Every knee shall bow*. Remember how Paul ends his letter. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). Certainly, some of these creatures are the *holy* angels. However, others are not. You can see this very clearly, for instance, in the Psalm when it says, “You crushed *Rahab* like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm” (Ps 89:10). *Rahab* is a fallen heavenly being. She’s not the only one here.

We have *the moon*, which a Canaanite believed was a god or goddess. It is there with “a faithful witness” (vs. 37; I believe Christ himself³⁰) who is being given the covenant promises. Now, it isn’t that Ethan the Ezrahite, as a believer in the Lord, thought of the moon the same way he did as a pagan Canaanite. Nevertheless, in putting the moon here, he is clearly harkening back to the divine council and the fallen angels. They too are witnesses, even as it said in vs. 6 with the whole council of the sons of God.

³⁰ Heiser talks about this in his dissertation. For a summary see [Michael S. Heiser](#), “[Naked Bible Podcast Transcript Episode 336: Begotten by the Spirit](#),” (Aug 9, 2020).

Finally, this entire Psalm is a [subversion of the Baal Cycle](#). In that story, Baal, one of the sons of El (god), usurps his brother Yam (the Sea) as high god of the pantheon. Yam is the “[beloved son](#)” of El. However, in Psalm 89, the beloved son is Christ, the Messiah (see [vv. 26, 38](#)). Yet, the Father is, as in the Baal Cycle, called El. This is all because God inspired a Canaanite believer to write it.

When we go to [the Transfiguration](#), this makes much more sense. Remember that Psalm 89 and the Transfiguration included all these parallel ideas. As many have argued, the Transfiguration took place on Mt. Hermon. Mt. Hermon is in [Psalm 89:12](#). Mt. Hermon is where El met with the divine council of heavenly beings in pagan traditions. This includes Baal. Thus, when the Heavenly Father speaks out before the witnesses of Peter, James, John, Moses, and Elijah that “[This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased](#)” ([Matt 17:5](#)), there were surely others there to hear that pronouncement. Jesus choose this mountain of all the places for this to happen for good reasons. Those others included fallen heavenly beings, *elohim*, angels like Baal himself.

Into this, if [Baal](#) (the storm god) and Zeus (the storm god) and [Satan](#) via [Rev 2:13](#) are all the same entity,³¹ then we now

³¹ See [Douglas Van Dorn](#), “[Satan, Zeus, Baal, and the Prince of Rome](#),” *Academia* (May 24, 2019).

know why Satan was so raging mad and sought above all other things from this moment on to put Jesus to death. And this then makes sense of Jesus saying just before this event that “[the gates of hell will not prevail](#)” over the church. Here, the war of church begins. The Transfiguration is the first offensive battle Jesus wages at the gates of hell, which just so happen to have been believed to be there at the cave of Pan. Through the witnesses of Moses, John, James, Elijah, and Moses to the Transfiguration event, we have as it were [the heavenly church](#) gathered there on the mountain, witnessing the declaration of the new covenant for the first time there on Mt. Hermon. And through this declaration and all subsequent times the Gospel goes forth from the church, the powers are put on notice. The church goes on the offensive, a theme we will look at in future weeks.

Let’s [return to Ephesus](#) for a moment. When Paul speaks of these powers in heavenly places, those enemies of the faith that are our true foe, he would have had someone very specific in mind. She was [a goddess](#). Her name was [Artemis](#) of the Ephesians. Her temples was there, in Ephesus, and it was one of the seven wonders of the world.

We find out more about this in Acts, when Paul visits the city. In this story, Luke tells us about a man named Demetrius, a silversmith. He made silver shrines of Artemis. These brought no little business to the many craftsmen of the city ([Acts 19:24](#)). But when Paul came and started preaching the Gospel, Demetrius got angry because many men's livelihoods were at stake ([25](#)), because Paul was going around persuading many people to turn away from Artemis saying that “[they are not gods who are made by hands](#)” ([26](#), YLT). So, Demetrius persuaded the city that if Paul were allowed to continue preaching that “[the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship](#)” ([27](#)). “[Great is Artemis of the Ephesians](#)” ([28](#)) came the shout throughout the city. Thus, when Paul tells us about the powers and rulers of heaven being told about the mystery through the church, he would first and foremost have had Artemis in mind.³² But what happened to her worship as the Gospel went forward? Demetrius was right. He it declined. And what has happened to the worship of these evil creatures as the Gospel has increasingly been lost and the church has

³² For more see [Douglas Van Dorn](#), “[Ephesians: The City and Letter](#)” or “[Ephesians ~ Introduction and Letter](#)” (same thing), *rbcnc* (March 16, 2019).

grown weak and tired and powerless through it? They increase. Do you see now why church is so vital? But again, more on this in later weeks.

She is His New Creation

As we conclude, I want to take us through [a bit more of the song](#). After telling us about the church's one foundation, which we've seen we needed to go to the OT to fully understand, which then took us on an excursion to understand the mystery related to the church in Ephesians concerning its origin, it continues, [“She is his new creation by water and the Word. From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride; with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.”](#)

It is here that we see what is new about the church. She is [a new creation](#). Christ's creation. [He makes it](#). It is not a man-made entity. This new creation fits the new covenant that was prophesied in Psalm 89, declared on the Mt. of Transfiguration, and cut in the blood of Jesus at the cross. When we speak of “newness,” we can talk about it in a couple of different ways. We can think of something [brand new](#) that never existed before or we can think of it as [new and improved](#). Greek actually has two words that reflect these two usages. *Kainos*-new is about the quality (new and improved), while *neos*-new

is about the timing.³³ All but one time that new covenant of new creation appear in the NT, it is *kainos*. Thus, we have the continuity between the church and Israel with all those terms. The church in the OT is the caterpillar; the church in the NT is the butterfly.

This new creation could only take place if God himself came down as one of us, to take make a way for all the nations to be able to enter and become the temple of God. So, God incarnated in the womb of Mary and Jesus was born. Jesus then obeyed God unto all things, even death on a cross. He did this to the point of sacrificing himself as the High Priest sacrificed in the Lamb. His blood was spilt. All things were made clean in him and by him and through him. This was better than the sacrifices of the old covenant system, because they were never able to take away sins, only cover them. But now, through Christ, anyone who turns to him in faith has forgiveness of sins—once for all.

And when this happens, they become part of Christ's church, *engrafted into the vine*, the Israel of God, his Bride. This is not something people can appreciate unless they apprehend it by faith. This includes Christ himself and what he has done as well as his church. Clowney says,

³³ See Douglas Van Dorn, "[Hebrews 8:6-13: The New Covenant \(Part I\)](#)," rbcnc (3-20-2016), esp. 8-10. The classic study of these two words is Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 9th ed., improved. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), 219-25.

Why is this so? Because ... the church is God's creation, not simply a human institution. It is different, even strange. The favourite fantasy of science fiction is true of the church: its members are aliens, even though they lack pointed ears. Their astral home is not another planet, but God's own heaven. It is not surprising that sociologists find the church rather puzzling. Even Christians have extraordinary difficulty in describing the church. Luther claimed that a girl of seven knows what the church is, but that he had to pen thousands of words in order to explain what she understood. The church is different because it is the born-again family of God, the assembly and body of Christ, the dwelling of the Spirit.³⁴

Adding to the fact that we are a peculiar people, a people born not of flesh and blood, a people who belong to a kingdom that cannot be seen with the eyes or located on a map are all the amazing things going on with the origins and foundation of the church in spiritual realms that we cannot see. And it now becomes apparent that this is why the Church confesses that **we** “*believe in the church.*” The **church is a matter of faith.** This is why so many mock it. They lack the faith to see what God has told them about her. Stop looking at the church the way the world does. Look to her as Jesus does. He

³⁴ **Edmund P. Clowney**, *The Church*, ed. Gerald Bray, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 71.

is her foundation. He always has been, even into the deep origins of her beginning in long ages past. He calls her to himself. He always has. He calls her to assemble together to worship. It is what we've always done. But you can only appreciate this truth when you believe in him and his church. You've heard the Word tell you about Christ's church. Will you learn to love her as he does?

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