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## **THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison**

### **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

The church of Christ is the church that belongs to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “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” (Matthew 16:18). Jesus did not promise to build multiple kinds of churches. He only promised to build His one church. The term “church of Christ” simply identifies to whom the church belongs. Jesus Christ purchased the church with His own blood therefore He is the owner of the church (Acts 20:28). The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is “the Head” of His church which eliminates the possibility of any other head (Ephesians 1:22-23). The church is the spiritual body of Christ. Colossians 1:24 reads, “...for the sake of His body, which is the church.”

The church of Christ was not an accident nor a substitute for a postponed kingdom as taught by the premillennialists. No, the church IS the spiritual Kingdom of Christ. In the same account in which Jesus promised to build His church, He told His apostles, “And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...” (Matthew 16:19). These “keys” were used by the apostles to open the door into the church as recorded in Acts 2. The keys were the terms of entrance for those added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:37-47). According to Old Testament prophecy, the kingdom was to be established in Jerusalem in the last days (Isaiah 2:1-3; Joel 2:28-32). These prophecies were fulfilled as recorded in the second chapter of the book of Acts (Acts 2:18ff). Thus, the church to which the Lord added the saved (Acts 2:47) is the spiritual kingdom of Christ!

Yet, some would say that the kingdom is not the church but is to be established in the future on earth. However, Jesus plainly taught, “My kingdom is not of this world...” (John 18:36). It was not the intention of Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom the first time he came, and neither will it be His purpose when He comes again. Paul wrote that both he and the Colossian Christians had already been “translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son” in the first century (Colossians 1:13). How could they have been translated into something that did not yet exist?

The phrase “Kingdom of God” is sometimes used to refer to the eternal state of the saved (Acts 14:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). However, those in the kingdom or the church of Christ will be those Jesus will save in heaven (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23). That being true, no accountable person who has not been added by the Lord to His church is in a saved condition. When a penitent believer is baptized into Christ and added by the Lord to His church that person is granted the hope of eternal life. Will you let the Lord add YOU to the church of Christ?