

Answer 22: 27 proofs of “The First Church”

22. They sang “in the midst of the church” (Matt. 26:30; Heb. 2:12).

The following are the text of the two verses cited in support of this proof of the existence of the New Testament church.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. (Matthew 26:30)

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. (*Hebrews 2:10-13*)

The passage from Hebrews is a quotation from Psalm 22, which states:

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. My praise shall be of thee in the **great congregation**: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. (*Psalm 22:22-25*)

Now, Psalm 22 is strictly and specifically a prophecy of Christ to come, and it is focused on the cross. This psalm

reveals to all that will attend to it, the suffering of Christ as He hung on the cross. At some point from the time the Lord Jesus Christ was arrested and falsely tried, the Father had turned away from Him as the sin of all men everywhere, at all times was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a revealing of things we cannot really understand – the separation from the Father, and reproach of the Father laid upon the Son. This is the only time in all of time and eternity that the Father and the Word (which is Christ) are separated, and that all because of our sin.

However, Psalm 22 also reveals the joy that was set before the Lord Jesus Christ when the work of the redemption was completed. This is where verse 22 picks up and shows us of a time to come. The portion cited in Hebrews, chapter 2, verse 12 is only a small part of the passage of psalm 22 and does not give a context. Even the portion I have quoted above is not the entire passage, but is enough to establish a context. That context is set in the phrase underlined above, which states “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: . . .” This makes it clear that he is not referring to the New Testament church, but rather to the great congregation that will be in heaven when all the redeemed will gather, and Christ will declare the Father and praise Him before them. In this sense, the word “church” is employed in Hebrews 2:12. This in no way states anything about the form or substance of the New Testament church, other than all the members of New Testament churches will be there. Moreover, it detracts nothing from the New Testament church to reference that great called-out assembly of believers in heaven.

To claim this is proof of the existence of the New Testament church, is to wrest Scripture and yank a passage out of context, and does nothing substantive towards proving the existence of the church. The reason for this is that an assumption must be made that the New Testament church was in existence at the time. However, since Christ had yet to

purchase His church with His own blood (*Acts 20:28, Hebrews 9:15-21*) there is manifestly no New Testament church in existence yet.