

When Did the Church, the Body of Christ, Begin?

**The Answer is
Effectively made by the Apostle Paul
On at least Six occasions in the book of Ephesians!**

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Introduction

It is amazing how a simple and basic issue, as to when the Church of Jesus Christ began, can be made into a complicated, entangled snare by some who pride themselves in being “Rightly Dividers.” (This is their preferred theological designation.) In reality, they end up “dividing” Christians into factions by their sectarian and haughty spirit. Their own choosiness for naming their assemblies is often “Grace” this and “Grace” that. Their primary center is the *Berean Bible Society* in Germantown, Wisconsin.

It is further amazing that in some of their own major treatises on the subject of when the Church began, they flat-out admit the many Scriptures they assemble do not specifically say when the Church began. For instance, *Acts Dispensationally Considered*, by C.R. Stam, says on page 173, of Vol. II, “But do the Scriptures (which he was using) say, in so many words, exactly when it (the Church) began? No, not in so many words.” Consequently, Mr. Stam goes on to say, “As to this (when it precisely began) there may be some difference of opinion...Let us therefore not make an issue where God does not make one.” And, indeed, because the Scriptures they use do not specifically say what they are contending for, they themselves are naturally “sub-divided” into this or that preference group, depending upon which chapter or verse seems to satisfy their own individual taste better.

Paul Sadler, the successor to Mr. Stam, makes the same admission—“Acts chapter 9 does not specifically state that a new dispensation is being introduced. Nor is there a direct reference to the Church, the Body of Christ” (*The Historical Beginning of the Church*, page 22). As a consequence, Mr. Sadler admits, “we cannot even agree among ourselves as to when the Church began” (pg. 21). Originally, under the ministry of Bullinger of England, the position was that the Church began after *Acts 28*. Then, under the ministry of J. C. O’Hair of Chicago, the major position moved forward to *Acts 18*. Under the ministry of Cornelius Stam, it has moved forward to *Acts 9* (though some stopped at *Acts 13*). (It seems like they are getting closer to Acts 2 all the time.) Mr. Sadler states in his article, “Those who teach that Acts Chapter 2 is the ‘birthday’ of the Church do so with tongue in cheek, for this position has absolutely no Scriptural basis” (page 10-11). However, I can assure you, the notes that we will examine in this Bible study will not be “with tongue in cheek,” nor will it leave us to our imaginations, speculations or assumptions in answer to this very basic question as to the “birthday” of the Church of Jesus Christ, and to the beginning of the Dispensation of the Grace of God. For the sake of Mr. Sadler and those of his persuasion I will not be repeating the traditional arguments as to when the Church began. I am going to go right to the heart of the revelation about the Church in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians.

Six Positive Answers are in the Revelation of Ephesians!

In Ephesians we are specifically told the distinctive revelation concerning the “Dispensation of the Grace of God” was given to Paul to reveal, in turn, to the Church (Eph. 3:2). Paul also told us that the other apostles and prophets also understood glimpses of this revelation (Eph. 3:5). Collectively, this Church becomes a “new man” (Eph. 2:15), composed of both saved Jews and saved Gentiles placed into “the same body” (Eph. 3:6), i.e., the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This dispensation, or *household economy*, pertains to the nature and time period of the Church of Jesus Christ over which Christ is “Head” and the members form the “body” (Eph. 1:22,23). The present age is the time period wherein saved Jews and saved Gentiles are “reconciled to God in one body” and “baptized by one Spirit into one body” (Eph. 2:16-19 & I Cor. 12:13).

The book of Ephesians itself has been referred to by some Bible teachers as “the mountain peak” of Christ’s revelation (through Paul) concerning the Church of Jesus Christ. This is generally acknowledged to be true because in this epistle the Church receives its most exalted definition and the age or dispensation it occupies has its most specific explanation. The members of this Church are said to be “seated with Christ in heavenly places” (Eph. 1:3 & 2:6). Obviously, the Church or Church age, of which every saved person today is uniquely and automatically made a member, had a specific beginning in time. In the book of Ephesians Paul is inspired to give us at least six specific Scriptural answers to pinpoint that time. This should alleviate the mere speculations of so-called “Rightly Dividers” who specialize in *wrongly dividing* on this subject.

Number One, The Church began with the “Holy Spirit Of Promise”—Eph. 1:13.

The believers in Ephesus and throughout the world today are all “*sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise*” according to this revelation. This is a very specific and exclusive expression—the *Holy Spirit of Promise*. It is only used several times in the Scriptures and is not difficult to trace its origin, meaning and application. We will look at the initial “Promise” and at each time it is applied.

This *Promise* of the Holy Spirit, sent from the Father, was first made by Jesus Christ the night of His betrayal, as recorded in John 14:16, 17 & 15:26. Christ said—

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of Truth...But when the Helper comes, whom I will send from the Father, the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

Jesus Christ Himself had explained that He was leaving His residence on this earth. He would be rejected and crucified, but also resurrected and glorified, and return back into heaven. But, He herein *promised* to send another One in His place to direct the disciples on earth—the *Holy Spirit of God*. The Holy Spirit would be sent “*from the Father*” once Christ had ascended into heaven. We are to understand that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, now takes up His residence upon earth in the hearts and lives of all believers. This is a unique presence of the Spirit on earth, for an undisclosed period of time, to bless, guide and direct in the Church of Jesus Christ.

From the Gospel of Luke 24:49, and after His resurrection, this *Promise* is further confirmed by Christ, just before He ascends up into heaven. Christ tells the disciples—

*Behold, I send the **Promise** of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.*

In Acts 1:4 & 5, Christ continued His instructions to the disciples, just before His ascension. This *Promise* of the Holy Spirit sent *from the Father* is equated with the soon coming “*baptism of the Holy Spirit.*” The disciples were not to go out and preach until they had received the *Promise of the Spirit*. Here are Christ’s further words—

*He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the **Promise** of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me. For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’*

Immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter told us this *Promise of the Holy Spirit* had first been fulfilled, as recorded in Acts 2:33. He preached to the Jewish crowd, who had witnessed the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit in the disciples, the truth about Christ and explained—

*Therefore being exalted (Jesus Christ) to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the **Promise of the Holy Spirit**, He poured out this (the baptism of the Holy Spirit) which you now see and hear (the evidence or fruits of).*

In addition, the apostle Peter was inspired to further explain that this *Promise* is for “all” who will respond positively to the “call” of God to salvation, Acts 2:39—

*For the **Promise** is to you and to your children, and to **all** who are afar off, **as many** as the Lord our God will call.*

The apostle Paul, in Galatians 3:14, repeats this *Promise* for the Gentiles who exercise the faith of Abraham, and receive the consequent blessings—

*That the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the **Promise of the Spirit** through faith.*

Consequently, the Ephesians saints (Eph. 1:13), who were composed of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles, were all “*sealed by the Holy Spirit of **Promise**,*” which, as we have clearly seen, was first given on the Day of Pentecost, and promised to “all” believers thereafter. The Gentiles are likewise recipients of the same *Promise*. There is no other “Holy Spirit of *Promise*” anywhere in the Greek Scriptures. So we know wherever the *Holy Spirit of Promise* is first applied to the saints, this is *precisely* where the Church of Jesus Christ had its beginning. We are not only NOT left to speculations, but we can actually know the very DAY and HOUR of this beginning, as specified in Acts 2:1 & 15—the Day of Pentecost, about nine A.M.!

Now, those who reject the clear testimony of these Scriptures create for themselves innumerable problems! They obviously have to create a different Church from the one which began on Pentecost, and then create a different dispensation to go with that second Church, and then even go so far (in their delusion) to create a different plan of personal soul salvation for each Church. Then from Acts 9 (?) or 13 (?), when

their second Church comes into existence, all the way through Acts 28, they have to wrestle with the fact that in many passages these two Churches are indistinguishable and co-mingle as if they are ONE and the same! Now it takes a real imaginative theologian to do all this! But, these “Rightly Dividerers” are up to the task. They just created their own jargon, exercise some phenomenal “dispensational gymnastics,” and create two more problems for each one they solve! Then they have the nerve to stand back, look at their muliganstew, and say “there are simply some things hard to understand”!

Every Bible teacher worth his salt knows there is, of course, a transition in the book of Acts time period, wherein the Christian community phases out of Judaism into pure Christianity. But that transition begins, very simply, on the Day of Pentecost when the *Promise of the Holy Spirit* was first received. In the middle of the book of Acts (chap.15) all see clearly that Gentiles are free from the Mosaic Law system. By the end of Acts, the Prison Epistles and the book of Hebrews reveal the Law system itself “is now ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13).

**Number Two, Christ became “Head over all things
to the Church” WHEN God “seated Him at His right hand”**
Eph. 1:20-23.

There is plainly only ONE point of time when God the Father had Christ positionally “seated at His right hand.” Most certainly, it was not after Acts 28 where Paul had been in Roman confinement. Nor is there the remotest indication it was in Acts 13 with the first ministry travels of Paul. Nor do the Scriptures say it was in Acts 9 with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Everyone admits to this! The Scriptures indicate there was a ten day time period after Christ ascended into heaven wherein Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father, and He sent forth the Promise of the Spirit to indwell believers on earth (see Acts 1:3 with 2:1). Of course, this climaxed on the Day of Pentecost! And, we should add; He simultaneously became Head over all things to the Church which is His body according to Eph. 1:20-23—

Which (power or authority) He (God the Father) worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The fact of Christ being positioned at the right hand of God was prophesied in Psalm 110:1—

The LORD said unto my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’

Christ told the religious rulers of Israel that after their judgment of Him He would actually be seated at the right hand of God, Luke 22:69—

Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.

The Gospel of Mark tells us that this was fulfilled after Christ was received up into heaven from out of their sight, Mark 16:19,20—

*So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and **sat down at the right hand of God**. And they (having received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost) went out and preached everywhere...*

The giving of the Holy Spirit of Promise to the believers on the Day of Pentecost coincided precisely and perfectly with Christ being seated at the right hand of the Father, and therefore Peter confidently preaches—Acts 2:32 &33—

*This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are witnesses. Therefore being exalted to **the right hand of God**, and having received from the Father the **Promise of the Holy Spirit**...*

Consequently, Ephesians 1:13 (the promise of the Spirit) harmonizes perfectly in time with Christ being seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and sending the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Mark 16:19 and Acts 2:32. As plainly stated in Ephesians 1:20-23, at this time He became “**Head over all things to the Church which is His body.**”

To contend otherwise is to impudently argue against the Spirit filled preaching of Peter and the Divine revelation given to the Apostle Paul!

**Number Three. Both saved Jews and Gentiles are reconciled
In One Body through the Cross—Eph.2:16-18**

The workings of God are utterly amazing! From man’s perspective in the experience of the early Church, Gentiles were not brought into fellowship with Jewish believers until the household of Cornelius in Acts 10, under the ministry of Peter. In actual chronological time, this was only within a 5 to 10 year time frame after Pentecost. Shortly thereafter, many more Gentiles were added to the assembly of Antioch, as recorded in Acts 11:19-21. And then, several years later, great numbers of Gentiles were added under the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, as recorded in Acts 14:27. Yet in the counsel and reckoning of God, our attention is directed all the way back to the cross of Jesus Christ, and we are told Gentiles were “*reconciled in one body through the cross*” work of Jesus Christ.

*And that He might reconcile both to God **in one body through the cross**, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by **one Spirit** to the Father (Eph. 2:16-18).*

Remember, this is the very same “body” of Ephesians 1:22,23—“The Church which is Christ’s body,”—over which Christ became the “Head,” when He “was seated at the right hand of the Father,” as recorded in Acts 2. It is also the very same “Spirit” that was *Promised* to all believers by Jesus Christ, as was stated in Acts 2. That means that Jewish members began to be added to that “body,” by virtue of the “cross,” in Acts 2, and Gentile members began to be added to that very same “body,” by virtue of the very same “cross,” with Peter’s message to the household of Cornelius in Acts 10. There is just “one

body” and one “*cross*.” There is not a special “cross” for a special “Jewish body” anymore than there is a special “cross” for a different “Gentile body”! God obviously did not start a different body just for the Gentiles or for a brand-new group of Jews and Gentiles. Nor does any Scripture, anywhere in the New Testament, indicate there was a New body, with a different “Head,” of saved Jews and saved Gentiles, with a different “Spirit of Promise,” started after Paul’s conversion. All have already admitted that the Scriptures do not say anything even remotely akin to this!

Again, Paul states in Ephesians 2:13, that Gentiles “*have been brought near by the blood of Christ*.” The common ground for reconciling Jews and Gentiles into one body was not Paul’s conversion, or Paul’s ministry, or the time the revelation of the mystery was given, but Christ’s shed blood for all mankind’s redemption—in other words, ***the cross work of Christ!*** And the benefits of repentance unto salvation, on the basis of Christ’s death and resurrection, were first preached by the apostle Peter, on the Day of Pentecost—Acts 2:22-24, 36-39. One can rest assured, that the “*baptism into (Greek-eis) the remission of sins*,” was exactly as specified—an inward, spiritual transaction, cleansing sins of the soul, which no water ritual could ever possibly perform. Consequently, there is not the slightest hint that the apostles went around asking the unbelieving Jewish leaders if they could borrow their water purification *mikvahs*, in order to water baptize all these repentant souls. The Spiritual baptism of these repentant sinners was just like the baptism on the 120 believers a short time earlier. This baptism was performed by God upon true heart repentance and faith in Christ of the individuals. It was spontaneous—just as spontaneous as was the initial Promise of the Holy Spirit!

In addition, the gospel of personal soul salvation that Peter preached to the first Gentile converts was the very same message, “to believe in Christ for remission of sins” (Acts 10:43), as had been given to the Jews from the beginning (Acts 2:38). As a result, Peter could say, “(God) ***made no distinction between us (Jews) and them (Gentiles), purifying their hearts by faith***” (Acts 15:9). And Peter further added, “***But we believe that through the GRACE of the Lord Jesus Christ we (Jews) shall be saved in the same manner as they (the Gentiles)***.” So, once again, the basis of personal soul salvation is the same—the Grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ’s substitutionary death.

As to personal soul salvation Peter and Paul preached the same message. They better have, for Paul says, “If any man preach any other gospel than that which I preach, let him be accursed!” (Gal. 1:8,9). Consequently, the difference that did exist between the “gospel to the circumcision” and the “gospel to the uncircumcised” (Galatians 2:7-9) is NOT in the **basis** of soul salvation, but in the **people** being saved! The means of salvation is the same! However, the walks of the two people are different at this time in the history of the Church. The good news to the Jewish people is that through faith in Christ they can be saved by God’s grace—and go on keeping the Law of Moses, until otherwise notified. The good news to Gentile people is that through faith in Christ they can be saved by God’s grace—and can go on in liberty from the observance of that Law system.

The basis for the salvation of both Jew and Gentile, as Paul stated in Ephesians is the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross for all sins. This is why the cross work of Christ “RECONCILES” the two groups—it performs the same operation on the souls of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles! The shed blood of Christ on the cross for their sins is, most certainly, the first thing they have in common!

Number Four, The Church began when Christ became
“The Chief Cornerstone”—Eph. 2:20-22

*Jesus Christ Himself being **the Chief Cornerstone**, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy Temple in the Lord. In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:20-22).*

Again, the Scriptures are not mysterious about this subject. There is only one time and place, according to the Scriptures, where the *Chief Cornerstone* was announced as having been set up, and that is on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2-4!

First, the Chief Cornerstone was predicted in Psalm 118:22, 23—

*The stone which the builders rejected has become **the Chief Cornerstone**. This was the LORD’S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.*

This passage is quoted by the Lord Jesus Christ as applicable to Him in light of Israel’s national rejection of Him as their Messiah. See Matt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10 & Luke 20:17, 18. His words furthermore indicate an immediate application—

*Then He looked at them and said, ‘What then is this that is written: “The stone which the builders rejected has become **the Chief Cornerstone**”? Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomsoever it falls, it will grind him to powder.’*

The application is first made immediately after the Day of Pentecost. We will read Acts 4:11 & 12 where Peter is again speaking—

*This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become **The Chief Cornerstone**. Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

Not only had Jesus Christ “become the Chief Cornerstone” on the Day of Pentecost, but the apostle Peter again made the application of Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22 as a present reality at the time he wrote his first letter approximately 33 years later (63 A.D.). This was probably shortly after Paul wrote the Ephesian letter (62 A.D.). See I Peter 2:6 & 7—

*Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold I lay in Zion a **Chief Cornerstone**, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’ (In the Hebrew, the Isaiah passage reads, ‘Behold I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, **a precious cornerstone**, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.’) Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become **The Chief Cornerstone**.*

So, we conclude, the *Chief Cornerstone* was still in place, from the Day of Pentecost when it was first applied, until Peter’s much later (approx. 33 years) epistle. Indeed, I am sure we would all agree, Christ will remain as the *Chief Cornerstone* for this entire age.

In addition, the statement by the apostle Paul, in quoting the very same passage from the very same Hebrew Scriptures (Psalm 118:22), and making the very same application, demonstrates beyond any shadow of a doubt, that the position of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the *Chief Cornerstone* of the Church which is Christ's body, began on the Day of Pentecost. To believe otherwise is a mockery to the Scriptures—there certainly were not two different “Cornerstones”! But, if the teaching of these extreme dispensational brethren is true, then the Church of which Christ was the “Chief Cornerstone,” according to Peter, must cease to exist, if not be already terminated, by the time of Peter's letter, and a different one set up some time later. It is obvious, Peter knew nothing about this spiritually stupid conclusion, nor did the apostle Paul!

I am sure we would all agree that there are not two different “Cornerstones,” composed of two different “Christs,” over two different “Churches”!!!

**Number Five, The Church is built upon the Foundation
of the Apostles and Prophets—contemporaries of
The Chief Cornerstone—Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11 & I Cor. 12:28**

*Having been built on **the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets,**
Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).*

In simplicity and in reality, there is no mistaking who the *Apostles and Prophets* were, even as there was no misunderstanding Who the *Chief Cornerstone* is!

Since there was only ONE “*Chief Cornerstone*,” upon which the “*ONE body*” was built, it follows that the “*Foundation*”—in this case, the “*Apostles and Prophets*”—must be the original Apostles and Prophets built upon the “*Chief Cornerstone*” laid in Acts 2-4:11. No one doubts that the Cornerstone was set on the Day of Pentecost, according to Acts 4:11—the Scripture says so! No one doubts that there were Apostles and Prophets made to rest on the Cornerstone on that same Day! After all, preliminary to that Day, the disciples spent an important meeting in making sure there were Twelve *Apostles*. In addition, when the Holy Spirit was initially poured out—that is, the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5)—the second gift of the Spirit was *Prophets*! See I Corinthians 12:13 & 28. I do not doubt in the least, that as one “born out of due time” (I Cor. 15:5-8), the Apostle Paul was also placed in this foundational position.

Now in Ephesians 3:5 & 6 the inspired Apostle Paul tells us further—

*(Concerning the *mystery*) which in other ages was not made known to
the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy
Apostles and Prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the
same body, and partakers of His promises in Christ through the gospel.*

Please take note of the fact that the truth of God's design for Gentiles had been revealed to the apostle Paul, and became totally understandable to the other apostles by the events of Acts 10, and at the council in Acts 15. On this later occasion the leaders, both Paul and the other apostles, were all led by the Holy Spirit, in concluding that God's program for Gentiles was that they were not to be placed under the Mosaic law system. And that, furthermore, both Jews and Gentiles could live together in harmony with that judgment as initially expressed by James the Lord's brother. To the new Gentile converts

the Apostles, elders, prophets and Jewish brethren wrote: “*For it seemed good to **the Holy Spirit** and to **US** to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things...*” (Acts 15:28). In addition the Apostle Paul says in Galatians 2:9, “*And when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me (Paul’s distinctive revelation), they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision.*”

This decision demonstrates positively the UNITY of the Church of Jesus Christ at this time. This is unmistakable! It is James, the Jerusalem church’s active leader, who expresses the decision on behalf of the Gentile assemblies. Obviously both Jew and Gentile assemblies are a part OF THE SAME UNIVERSAL Church! Now if there are two different Churches, as the extreme dispensationalists contend, then what right and authority do leaders in one Church have over the other Church? And, furthermore, why is such a council even necessary? If the false teachers on this subject are correct, then Paul should have boldly stated, “I am not going up to Jerusalem to settle anything!” And again, “You and your Kingdom Church should go your own distinct way, and I and the new Body will go our own way!”

Of course, the fact that Paul did not do this, but rather acknowledged the authority of the other apostles and leaders in the body of Christ, and rejoiced with the Gentiles in the settlement, indicates that there is just One Church of which Jesus Christ is the Head, and the apostles and prophets are the next foundation. This beautiful truth was given by Paul earlier in I Corinthians 12:12, 13 & 28—

*For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit... And God has appointed these in the Church: **first apostles, second prophets, third teachers...***

The last reference Paul makes in the Ephesian letter concerning “Apostles and Prophets” is from chapter 4, verses 8-13—

**Number Six, The Church of Jesus Christ was Founded When
Jesus Christ Ascended on High—Eph. 4:8-13**

*Therefore He says: ‘**When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men**’ (Psalm 68:18). Now this, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth! He Who descended is also **the One Who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things!** And He Himself gave some **apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers** for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the **EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST...***

It is very clear the apostle Paul is telling us that the particular offices in the Church which is Christ’s body, were first given WHEN Jesus Christ “ascended into heaven.” Like the other key points, there is really no argument as to when this happened!

It certainly didn't happen sometime after Acts 28! It furthermore didn't happen sometime around Acts 13! And, last but not least, it certainly did not happen with the conversion of the apostle Paul as recorded in Acts chapter 9! Everyone knows Christ ascended into heaven in Acts chapter 1 and verse 9. That is what the Scriptures plainly say! And in Acts chapter 2, the gifts were given! And consequently, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers began to function amongst the members of the Church, as recorded throughout the rest of the book of Acts.

The "ascension" in view in this passage from Ephesians is Christ's ascension into heaven just before Pentecost. The "body of Christ" in view in this passage is the "Church which is Christ's body," as previously identified in Eph. 1:22,& 23. The conclusion in view is that the Church of Jesus Christ clearly began with the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost! You can rest assured, the only thing difficult about this revelation through Paul, is that it totally, and once for all, absolutely annihilates all the vain arguments to the contrary.

When Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross, and descended into hell for three days and nights, having satisfied the just court of heaven against sinners, He then gathered the righteous of Sheol, and gloriously arose from the dead, ascending over them ("leading captivity captive") into heaven, to be seated at the right hand of the Father, and dispensed the Holy Spirit of Promise back to indwell the saints on earth, **giving gifts of ministry unto the members of the Church which is His body!**

Paul's closing words to the Corinthian brethren, and beyond them to "all" saints everywhere (I Cor. 1:2), on the subject of the miraculous gifts (I Corinthians 14:37), may be apropos to transpose over to the discussion of this subject—

*If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual,
let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you
(on the subject of when the Church began)
are the revelations of the Lord!*

**Paul,
an Apostle of Jesus Christ!**

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