

Are You a Member of the Church You Can Read About in the Bible?

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH YOU CAN READ ABOUT IN THE BIBLE? It has been said that most people are what they are religiously because of human rather than scriptural reasons. Is it important to you that you please God and go to Heaven when your life on this earth is over? If your answer is “yes,” then you will want to know about the Lord’s church and his plan for your salvation.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

The word “church” (ekklesia) in the language in which the New Testament was originally means “that which is called out of.”

WHO FOUNDED THE CHURCH?

While men have founded many human churches throughout the world, Christ founded the scriptural church we read about in the Bible. Jesus promised “. . . On this rock I will build My church . . . (Matthew 16:18).

WHERE WAS CHRIST’S CHURCH ESTABLISHED?

Isaiah, Micah, Daniel, and Joel were among the prophets prophesying that the church would be established in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2; Daniel 2:31-45; Joel 2:28-32). They used terms such as “The mountain of God’s house” and the “kingdom” in referring to the establishing of the Lord’s New Testament church, which indeed took place seven hundred years after they had each died. Isaiah wrote, “. . . For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

The church of our Lord didn’t just happen—it was planned, prepared for and divinely established. Jesus used the term “kingdom” in making reference to the church He would establish. In fact, He used that term over 100 times. Sometime after His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus told His apostles, “. . . Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. 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” (Luke 24:46-49). The first two chapters in the Book of Acts record the fulfillment of these instructions to His apostles.

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED WITH THE BEGINNING POINT OF THE CHURCH?

Four reasons are immediately apparent: (1) as a matter of historical truth. (2) as a Bible fact, (3) as a mark of the identity of the church today, and (4) for a study of the church as it was originally.

Bible passages prior to Acts 2 show that the church (kingdom) was future, that is, not in existence at that time. An example would be Matthew 16:18 where Jesus said, “. . . On this rock I will build My church.” Acts 2:47 records, “. . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being

saved." The church was in existence . Sometime between Matthew 16:18 and Acts 2:47 the Lord's church was established. A closer examination will reveal that the church was established on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. Therefore, any church established prior to Acts 2 is too old to be the Lord's church, and any church established after Acts 2 is too young to be the Lord's church. For those who believe that the church was established during the days of John the Baptist, that would make the church too old. For those who believe that the church was established in 606, 1350, 1607, 1729, 1830, 1846, 1865, 1875, 1879, 1886, etc., would make these respective "churches" too young to be the Lord's church.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT I BE IN THE LORD'S CHURCH RATHER THAN IN ANY HUMAN CHURCH?

In **Matthew 15:13**, Jesus warns ". . . Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted."

HOW MANY CHURCHES DID CHRIST ESTABLISH?

Many people would answer, "many." However, the Biblical answer is ONE. In **Matthew 16:18** when Jesus said ". . . I will build My church . . .," the word "church" is singular (one), not plural (many). The apostle Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:18**, "And He (Christ) is the head of the body, the church . . ." Therefore, there are as many biblical churches as there are bodies, and **Ephesians 4:4** says, "There is one body . . ." The church is the body and the body is the church (Colossians 1:18, 23; Ephesians 1:22-23), the Bible says there is but ONE.

WHAT DID THE LORD NAME HIS CHURCH?

The Bible does not assign a particular name as such, but does use several terms to describe the Lord's church. Among them are:

- "Kingdom of heaven." Matthew 3:2; 4:17
- "Kingdom of God." Matthew 6:33; Mark 9:1
- "Kingdom of God's dear Son." Colossians 1:13
- "Kingdom of Christ and of God." Ephesians 5:5
- "Kingdom of Jesus Christ." Revelation 1:9
- "The church of God." 1 Timothy 3:15
- "Church." Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47
- "Churches of Christ." Romans 16:16
- "The house of God." 1 Timothy 3:15
- "Bride of Christ." Revelation 21:12

HOW IS THE LORD'S CHURCH ORGANIZED?

According to the Bible, the Lord's church has no earthly headquarters. It has no man-made ecclesiastical organization of any kind. Each congregation of the church is responsible for its own affairs. Biblical characteristics of the organization of the Lord's church include:

- Christ is head – Ephesians 1:22-23
- Elders – Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17
- Deacons – 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- Evangelists – Ephesians 4:11

- Teachers – Hebrews 5:12; Acts 8:4
- Members – 1 Corinthians 12:27

HOW DO THE SCRIPTURES REFER TO GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH?

- "Christians" – Acts 11:26
- "Saints" – Romans 1:7
- "Children" – Galatians 3:26
- "Disciples" – 1 Peter 6:1
- "Brethren" – Galatians 6:1

HOW ARE MEMBERS OF THE LORD'S CHURCH TO WORSHIP?

- Every Lord's Day (Sunday) – Acts 20:7
- Partake of the Lord's Supper – Acts 20:7
- Bible Preaching – Acts 20:7
- Prayer – 1 Thessalonians 5:7
- Singing – Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16
- Giving – 1 Corinthians 16:2

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and Truth" (John 4:24)

HOW MAY I BECOME A MEMBER OF THE LORD'S CHURCH?

The Lord desires that you obey Him and become a Christian. The Lord is not slacking His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Rest assured that He loves you and would like nothing more in your life than to see you obey the gospel of Christ. He will add you to HIS CHURCH when you have complied with His terms of pardon. While it is true that the church does not save, it is important to understand that the Lord adds the saved to the church . . . His church. Since the church belongs to Christ, He certainly has the authority to set the terms of pardon and membership, and He does that. This is known as the plan of salvation. His terms are simple and meaningful.

YOU MUST HEAR THE GOSPEL IN ORDER TO BELIEVE IT.

- **Romans 1:16**- "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."
- **Romans 10:14** - "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

YOU MUST BELIEVE . . . THAT IS, YOU MUST HAVE FAITH. Faith and belief are derived from the same Greek Word used in the Bible.

- **Hebrews 11:6** - "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

YOU MUST REPENT OF YOUR SINS.

- **Luke 13:3** - "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."
- **Acts 2:38** - "Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
- **Acts 17:30** - "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent."

YOU MUST CONFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN.

- **Matthew 10:32-33** - "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."
- **Romans 10:10** - "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
- **Acts 8:36-37** - "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

YOU MUST BE BAPTIZED (IMMERSED IN WATER) FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS.

- **Mark 16:16** - "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."
- **Acts 2:38** - "Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." **Acts 2:38**
- **Acts 22:16** - "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
- **Colossians 2:12** - "Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."
- **1 Peter 3:21** - "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism."
- **Galatians 3:27** - "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
- **Romans 6:4-5** - "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."

A study of the examples of conversions in the Book of Acts will help you to better understand the plan that Christ has for your salvation. A chart entitled "Examples of Conversion" is available under the menu button "Bible Charts" at www.myrtlebeachchurchofchrist.org

CONCLUSION:

Listening friend, the churches of Christ today are identical with the churches of Christ in the days of the apostles. And you too, can be simply a New Testament Christian, following the will of Christ. May this truly be your hour of decision in which you will want to render obedience to Christ.

Should you feel the need for further study (2 Timothy 2:15), please contact a congregation of the church of Christ near you. God wants you to know His will and obey it. Will you become a Christian today?

Are you really sure you are a member of the Church You
can read About in the Bible? Life is too short and
eternity is too long for You to be Wrong!