

WHY AM I A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

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Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, members of the Lord's Church, the Body of Christ, let me call your attention to Matthew 16:13-19. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, 'Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?' And they said, 'Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, 'But whom say ye that I am?'" And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'"

We are going to study the question, "Why am I a member of the Church of Christ? We are going to give several reasons, because several reasons are found in the Bible. One of the reasons that I am a member of the Church of Christ is because it has a scriptural builder. Christ founded the Church. He said, "... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Some have had the idea that John the Baptist built the Church. The very fact that Jesus Christ said that He would build the Church proves that John did not build the Church. I am not saying that John was not a very important person, because he was. I believe that John came here to this world with a mission to fulfill and he performed his duty. John was great because he did his duty and fulfilled his mission. His mission was not to build the Church. We can read throughout the scripture of the mission of John. In Isaiah 40:3, "The voice of a man that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." It was the mission of John to prepare the way of the Lord. We turn further in the scripture to Malachi 3:1, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." Now we will turn to the New Testament. "And he shall go before him in the spirit and the power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17) This was the mission of John. It was not his mission to build the Church. In fact, John was never a member of the Church. "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt. 11:11) When Jesus said, "... upon this rock I will build my church...", John was already dead. He had been beheaded in prison, so certainly John was not a member of the Church.

Some people ask, "What about all the other organizations in the world? I believe Jesus answers that in Matthew 15:13, "But he answered and said, 'Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.'"

I am a member of the Church of Christ because of its scriptural foundation. The stability of any building depends upon the foundation. The stability of any building depends upon the foundation upon which that building rests. A good foundation is very important. The foundation of the Church is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'" Some have tried to get us to believe that the rock here was Peter and that the Church was built upon Peter. How mistaken this is. If you will study this very closely in relation to other scriptures you will find that John was not speaking of Peter

as the rock. Notice the two different words here. The word 'Peter' comes from the word '*Petros*' and the word 'rock' that He mentioned here is '*Petra*'.

Jesus; as the Son of God is the foundation of the Church. In I Cor. 3:11, the Apostle Paul tells us very plainly, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." In Isaiah 28:16, we can also read about this great foundation. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." This foundation is one that has stood through the ages and it will continue to stand. It has been attacked by infidels, by atheists and by the skeptics but it has withstood all attacks and it will continue to stand.

I am a member of the Church of Christ because it was founded at Jerusalem. Isaiah prophesied, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Is. 2:2-3) Notice that we have in prophecy that it will be established in the last days, all nations will flow into the Lord's House and it will be in Jerusalem. Jesus said, "... Thus it is written, and thus it behooved 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 among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:46-50) Has this ever taken place? Was this ever fulfilled? We find the answer in the Bible.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day, But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." Peter began to preach to those people and he told them how they had slain the Lord and Saviour. They were cut to their hearts and they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:1-18 and Acts 2:37-38)

At this time the prophecies were fulfilled. The House of God is the Church that had its beginning that day. 'Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.' (Acts 2:47) We have here the prophecies of the Church having its beginning and being founded in Jerusalem and then we have the fulfillment of those prophecies. This is the reason that I am a member of the Church of Christ. Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. " (Acts 2:1-18 and Acts 2:37-38) At this time the prophecies were fulfilled. The House of God is the Church that had its beginning that day. "Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47) We have here the prophecies of the Church having its beginning and being founded in Jerusalem and then we have the fulfillment of those prophecies. This is the reason that I am a member of the Church of Christ.

Christ built only one Church. This is not a popular teaching but it is a Bible teaching. We are not in this world to try to please man. We are not here to be popular with man but we are here to please God. Christ said, "... upon this rock I will build my Church." He did not say He would build churches. It was in the singular. This Church that we are talking about is the Body of Christ. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:4-6) The Apostle Paul said, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (I Cor. 12:27) The Church is the Body of Christ. We are told in Ephesians, the first chapter, that God put all things under Christ's feet "... and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22-23) The Church is His Body. We are the Body of Christ. We are the Church of Christ. Another scripture showing that the Church is the body of Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." We find that Christ built one Church. There is only one we can read about in the Bible.

The Bible teaches that we are God's family. How many families does God have? He only has one family. In John 10:16, we learn that there is one fold and one shepherd. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Sometimes there is confusion over the meaning of Romans 16:16, "... The churches of Christ salute you." Some say this says that there is more than one church. If they would observe this a little more closely they would know that this is definitely referring to congregations. I could correctly say the Churches of Christ in central Texas send their greetings to the brethren in Oklahoma. I would not be speaking about any denominations nor would I be speaking about several different organizations. I would be speaking about the different congregations there. If you will study the scripture in Romans, the sixteenth chapter, you will certainly see that this refers to the churches or congregations of Asia.

I am a member of the Church of Christ because we have the Bible as our only creed. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (II Tim 3:16-17) We know that the Bible furnishes us unto all good works. It is profitable for our doctrine and our reproof, for our correction and for instruction in righteousness. What else do we need? Many people have human creeds. Human creeds have caused division in the world. Paul said, "...let us walk by the same rule..." (Phil. 3:16) Therefore division is sinful and if these human creeds cause division they, too, are sinful. Some may say they are just like the Bible. If they are like the Bible, why have them? Why not just take the Bible? If they contain more than the Bible they contain too much and if they contain less than the Bible they don't contain enough. Why not just take the Bible?

I am a member of the Lord's Church, the Church of Christ, because there is salvation in the Church of Christ. Certainly, a person must live a Christian life. A person must live their life in the Church. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) How could anyone say the Church is not important? The Church is blood purchased. It certainly is important. It was bought with a price and that price was the

blood of Christ. There is salvation in Christ's Church. In Ephesians 5:23, we find that Christ is the savior of the body. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the savior of the body." What is the body? The body is the Church so He is the Saviors of the Church. God adds the saved to the Church. ". . . The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. " (Acts 2:47) Those people who say one can be saved outside the Church are saying one can be saved outside the family of God. Certainly, this is not true.

Finally, I am a member of the Church of Christ because it gives a Bible answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" We live in a confused world when it comes to the answer to that question. It is not the Bible that has confused people. It is man's answer to this question. You can hear every answer in the world. Some say you can just lay your hand on your radio, kneel down beside it and pray and you can be saved. Some say all you need to do is trust in the Lord. Some say just have faith or just believe. Others will say you can just stand up and raise your hand and they will say, "God bless you back there and God bless you over here," or words like this. Some make it even easier by saying, "Just send me your name and address and we will send you a salvation cloth that has been prayed over." You can get this cloth and you can be saved. These are some of the answers man has devised and there are many, many more.

What does the Bible say? What answer does the Bible give to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" One must hear the word. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17) One must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus said, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:23-24) One must repent of their sins. ". . .-except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3) One must confess that they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God according to Acts 8:37. One must be baptized into Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27) Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16) This is what the Bible says about salvation. This is what the Bible teaches and we must live faithful to death.

We must always be ready to give an answer when people ask us why we are a member of the Church of Christ. We must let the people know and never be ashamed of the Lord's Church. It is a fair question and certainly it deserves a Bible answer, a scriptural answer.