

"The Church"

Have you ever considered the church described in Scripture, the church that Jesus built? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're examining the church of the New Testament.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We look to the Scriptures for God's spiritual truths. The Scriptures are inspired of God and all-sufficient for our spiritual needs. 2 Peter 1:3 to 4 assures us that the Lord's "divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." Thanks for tuning in. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

The church Jesus built belongs to Him. He alone is its Lord and Savior. He alone is the head of the church, which was His body. Everything about the church is founded upon Him. The inspired New Testament reveals the Lord's will for the church that He purchased with His own blood. If we wish to have the Lord's blessing, we must walk with the Lord and be washed in His blood. When we obey the gospel of Christ, as the New Testament teaches, the Lord himself adds us to His church.

Now those who enter His church and live faithfully will enjoy entering the heavenly kingdom in the life to come. Those whom the Lord adds to the church in this life also live under His reign in His kingdom on earth. 1 Peter 3:18 says, "Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." Now since the Lord suffered for our sins, shouldn't we surrender our lives to Him and walk in His ways?

We offer this study free. That is The Church, on the church. And if you'd like a printed copy and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have programs and free materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Matthew 16:13 to 19, and examine the church found in the New Testament, the church that Jesus built and purchased with His own blood.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according Matthew chapter 16 verses 13 to 19. And it is here that Jesus first mentioned about building the church.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Your son Jesus came to this earth to build the church and to purchase it with His own blood. Father help us

always to be devoted to You, to be part of Your church and to be actively involved. To do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Scriptures are clear: the church and the Lord Jesus are unchangeably united. If Jesus is not your Lord and Savior, you cannot be in His church. If you haven't entered the church Jesus built, the one you read about in the New Testament, you need to. The church Jesus built belongs uniquely to Him and no one else. He is the head and the Lord of His church. Now Jesus didn't build thousands of churches with thousands of names, dozens of creeds, and dozens of practices. He built His church and purchased it with His blood. Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Now being inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul knew that people would try to change the doctrine and the practices of the church. He warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29 to 32, he said, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

Paul said savage wolves would arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. When people depart from God and the word of His grace they cease to have an inheritance among the saved. Now this is why Paul commended God and the word of His grace as the answer to build them up and to keep them strong in the faith. The word of God is always right, always righteous, always pure, and always sure (Psalm 19 verses 7 to 11). Now if you want to be right with God, my friend, go to the Bible. Go to the word of God.

The New Testament contains the new covenant established by the blood of Christ. Now this is the covenant by which men are saved and sanctified today. Those who follow the New Testament are following the Lord Jesus; they're following the most ancient ways. The pure way found in the New Testament doesn't have the corruptions that Paul predicted in Acts chapter 20. At a later time Paul warned Timothy about strange doctrines that cause people to be lost. 1 Timothy 1:3 to 5 says, "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

Paul challenges Timothy to preach what he knows is right, because people often seek for what they want rather than what they need. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:1 to 4, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance (with their own lust) to their own desires, and (they) will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."

I'm amazed people have come to believe myths and human traditions rather than looking to God's written word for their doctrines. You know, I can read of bishops or elders in Scripture, but where do you read about archbishops and cardinals and hierarchies in the church? You see, Jesus is the only

head of His church. The Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 23:9, "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." In spite of this, religious men wear the title "father." I can read in the New Testament where people sang hymns, but there simply is no command or example of any church in the New Testament worshiping with an instrument of music.

I can read about people weak to sin, but the Bible nowhere teaches that people are totally hereditarily depraved and incapable of believing or repenting. The concept of turning from sin back to God fills the book of Jeremiah. Why even the wicked people of Nineveh repented in Jonah chapter 3! The selfish prodigal son repented in Luke 15! And in Acts 19:19 the people of Ephesus, these pagans who practiced magic burned their books. The people in Thessalonica according to 1 Thessalonians 1 verse 9 "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God."

I once heard a preacher claim that God does the repenting for us, but Scripture holds each of us responsible for our sins. Paul said to the Stoics and Epicureans of Athens in Acts 17 verses 30 to 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." God doesn't do the repenting for you; He expects you to take responsibility and repent of your sins.

People claim "once saved, always saved"; but the Scriptures clearly teach people can lose their salvation. 2 Peter 2:20 to 21 says, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, (that is they become saved, they obeyed the gospel and) they are again entangled in them (that is these sins these defilement) and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them." You see, sin can harden the heart and cause people to stop believing, according to Hebrews 3:12 to 13. Please don't believe a lie and lose your soul. Turn to the word of God to find the truth.

Now the Lord has only one gospel. The early church was challenged by some Jewish Christians who demanded that the Gentiles who entered the church obey the law of Moses along with the gospel. And by demanding this they were perverting the gospel. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6 to 9, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one (that) you received, let him be accursed."

You see, whenever people change, edit, add to, or subtract from the gospel of Christ, they risk their souls. Sadly, some changes have become widespread; they have been practiced for centuries. And people continue to follow these changes without realizing that they're following a different gospel that did not come from the Lord but from men. And instead of saying what Peter said on the day of Pentecost, they're salvation comes by merely confessing what you believe and saying a little prayer. Well, this is a stark contrast to the pattern Peter provided on the day of Pentecost to the lost people in his first gospel sermon.

When the people guilty of crucifying Christ asked what to do about their sins, Peter responded in Acts 2:38 to 39, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and

for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." The gospel calls us to come to Christ, and this is how we are to respond. You can't be forgiven if you refuse to repent of your sins, and you can't be saved if you aren't baptized, that is immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins. Saul of Tarsus was baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Baptism, I tell you, is important, because that is when our sins are forgiven and the Lord adds us to His church. Look at Acts 2:41 and also verse 47.

The English word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek word, baptidzo, and refers to an immersion. The examples in the New Testament of baptism reveals that baptism required much water (John 3:23) it was a burial and resurrection in water in Romans 6 and verse 4 and Colossians 2 and verse 12. You see, baptism pictured the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and united the baptized with Christ and freed them from sin according to Romans 6:5 to 7. Church historians realize that the early church uniformly baptized by immersion. There's a Greek word for "sprinkle" and that word is rantizo. There is a Greek word for "pour" and that word is cheo. The Greek word for "immerse" is baptizo. And that word is used 117 times in the New Testament, and is never translated as "pour" or "sprinkle." If the Lord had wanted to substitute sprinkling or pouring for baptism, then the New Testament would clearly state this. The one baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of sins is an immersion in water.

Sadly, as time passed, people began to substitute the baptism taught in the Scriptures with substitutes. The first mention of pouring water for baptism is in the Didache, which is usually dated approximately 150 A.D. It would be known as "clinical baptism." Beginning with this early uninspired writing, there are occasional mentions of sprinkling in the general literature of church history on down through the centuries. It was not, however, until the Council of Ravenna, held in 1311 that sprinkling was officially accepted by some religions as a form of baptism. You see, men decided this on their own authority. No one has a right to substitute their practices with what the Scriptures teach.

According to Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, people sometimes imagine they are right with God when they aren't. Matthew 7:21 to 27 says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

Now if you want the oldest and purest form of Christianity, then go to the original source. And that is the New Testament, which is inspired and contains the words of the Lord and His apostles.

Let's pray together. Oh Heavenly Father help us always to go back to Your inspired written word for the truth. And to obey it's commands and to follow it's examples. Help us to do Your will out of love. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Throughout my ministry of more than fifty years, I've met people who studied the Bible and learned the truth. Many of them had been religious but had never studied the word of God for themselves. They didn't know what the Bible actually taught about what to do to be saved, about the

church, and about Judgment Day. They realized that what they had been taught before was different from what they learned in Scripture. They realized that they weren't following the word of the Lord but a doctrine or creed of men developed hundreds of years after the New Testament was written. They realized that they needed to make a change so that they would be right with the living God.

You see they wanted to be wise by building their house on the rock. That happens when people listening closely to the words of Jesus, that they do them. And that's building your house on a rock. You see they saw no value in adding to, subtracting from, or rewriting the words that Jesus spoke to fit a human tradition or the times. There is no substitute for obeying the words of Jesus if your house is to stand on the last day and you enter the heavenly kingdom. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

Now if you wish to have Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then trust and obey the Lord out of love. Put your faith and trust in Jesus and in the gospel. Recognize the Lord Jesus died for your sins on the cross, was buried, and was raised up by God on the third day. Change your heart and life by repenting of your sins. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You see, that's what 3000 people did on the day of Pentecost, and God added them to the church.

We hope that our study on the church, has caused you to examine what you have been taught. And if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free, won't cost you anything, at 1-800-321-8633. There's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. We also are excited that SEARCH is on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and then when you do be sure to like the programs, that helps us to spread. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. If you get ahold of us don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you show God your love by worshiping at church. I mean being there in person. Now you need a church family. And if you can attend in person, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We want you to be there. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.