

"Seven Reasons"

Occasionally people ask why I am a member of the Lord's church. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today I'm explaining why I am a member of the church Jesus built.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We're servants of the Lord and belong to Him. And His will matters to us. Servants don't tell the Master what they think; they listen and strive to do just as the Lord instructs. People today think they can establish their own church designed to fill their needs. Now a man-made church, however, isn't the Lord's church. There is but one Lord and His one body and that's His church. Thanks for taking time to tune in today. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

When I speak of the church of Christ, I'm not speaking about some denomination; I'm speaking of the church that belongs to Jesus. I'm not speaking about a building but of the people who are members of the body of Christ, the church. Acts 8 and verse 3 says, "Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison." Well there were no buildings designed to house congregations of Christians until many years later.

The English word "church" comes from a Greek term "ecclesia," which literally refers to an assembly or a congregation. The word "church" is found 109 times in the New Testament. Sometimes the word church refers only to a local congregation such as "the church of the Thessalonians," mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 1 verse 1; and sometimes the word church speaks of the universal church of Christ, such as is mentioned in Ephesians 5:23 that says that Christ "is the head of the church." 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 17 speaks of people coming together "as a church"; this refers to the assembled congregation. When the plural "churches" is used, it refers to local congregations but it never suggest churches that follow different doctrines or false doctrines.

Now we offer this study on Seven Reasons to be a member of the church of Christ free! And if you'd like a printed copy and 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 at, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Ephesians 5:25 to 27, and explore reasons to become a member of the church of Christ.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter 5 verses 25 to 27. And they speak about Christ and His relationship with the church.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that we can be a part of Your body, the church. That we can be part of that bride that is washed holy and clean and can live with You forever and ever. Help us to love You with all our hearts and to live righteous live according to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

Many are weary of the kind of Christianity they see in modern religious groups. They see moral and spiritual compromise, human traditions far from Scripture, abusive leaders, and the willingness to tolerate what God calls sin. Did you know there's an alternative? One can return to the Scriptures to

find the true and pure Christianity and do things biblically rather than rely on human creeds and conferences that overrule what God has said. One can worship as they did in the first century. One can find what the most ancient church truly is and be part of it today. Let's go back to the divine source, God's written word rather than rely on human creeds and traditions. Here are seven reasons why people should investigate the church Jesus built, the church of the New Testament.

First, the church is of divine origin. Now Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in the first century and revealed its divine origin. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 1 verse 2, "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours." The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." The crucifixion of Jesus didn't stop Jesus from building His church. The church is founded upon Jesus Himself, His death, burial, and resurrection. 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 11 says, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Second, the church that belongs to Christ was purchased by the Lord Jesus. Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus in Acts 20 and verse 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." Ephesians 1 and verse 7 says, "In Him (that is in Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." 1 Peter 1:18 to 19 tells the people of God, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

Third, the church that Jesus built began at the right time in the right place with the apostles. Acts 2 tells of the beginning of the church in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now no one can deny this is the true church. The one you read about in the scriptures. This was the time when the Spirit gave the apostles power to do miraculous things. This was when the first gospel sermon was preached, the sermon that offered forgiveness of sins. Now when people who heard this sermon repented and were baptized, three thousand souls were added (Acts 2 and verse 41). Later we learn that the Lord was adding the saved to their number, that is the church (Acts 2 and verse 47). Now baptism is the time that one receives forgiveness of sins, when one is saved, and when the Lord adds that person to the church. This is the pattern set by the Lord, and the Holy Spirit, and the apostles. It includes only those who are old enough to believe, repent, and be baptized. The scriptures never speak of an infant baptism.

Fourth, when Scripture speaks of the body of Christ, it doesn't always mean the physical body but is a reference to the church. Ephesians 1:21 to 22 says, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him (that is God gave Him) as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Colossians 1:18 says that He (Jesus) is the "head of the body, the church."

The New Testament emphasizes in the fact that there is one body. Yes. 1 Corinthians 10:17 written to the church says "we who are many are one body." 1 Corinthians 12:13 says "we were all baptized into one body." 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 20 says, "there are many members, yet one body." Ephesians 2:16 says Jesus reconciled Jew and Gentile "in one body to God through the cross." Ephesians 4 and verse 4 simply says, "There is one body." Now if there is but one body of Christ, then it is clear that there is just one church of Christ. There cannot be thousands of different churches with different name, beliefs, and practices.

This means the concept of denominationalism which has many churches with many names, creeds, and practices that divide them couldn't be the church that Jesus purchased. Many human doctrines and practices have seriously changed modern religious groups that call themselves Christian. They follow cultural standards rather than biblical teaching. They've left the pure gospel of Christ for substitutes and human traditions. The Lord Jesus pointed believers back to His own words in John 8:31 to 32: So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him that, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." You see the true church is made up of true disciples who remain in the words of Jesus.

Fifth, the church Jesus built can be found today is the one that follows the teaching found in the New Testament. You see they realize that the Old Testament is inspired but because they live under the new covenant worship the way the New Testament teaches. Not the Old Testament. You see they sing praises to God from their hearts. Christians sang for centuries without any instruments of music, because the New Testament gives no command or example of any Christians worshipping with instruments. Churches that follow the New Testament rather than popular ideas simply sing from their hearts.

The church in the New Testament observed the Lord's Supper of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine on the first day of the week, that is, on the Lord's day. They didn't do that on the Sabbath but on the first day of the week. Acts 20 and verse 7 says, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread (that is to observe the Lord's Supper), Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight." Now this phrase "break bread" is a reference to partaking of communion, the Lord's Supper. Paul waited seven days to be able to worship with the church that gathered on the first day of the week. Now the Lord's Day mentioned in Revelation 1:10 occurred on the first day of the week.

Now the Sabbath was the seventh day of the week and was observed by the Israelites under the old covenant, but Christians who live under the new covenant gather for worship on the first day of the week, the day that Jesus arose from the dead. 1 Corinthians 16:1 to 2 says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come." Now Constantine did not turn Sunday into the Sabbath; the church began on the day of Pentecost, which was always on the first day of the week. They worshiped in communion on the first day of the week in Acts 20 in the first century.

The Sabbath was part of the old covenant made with Israel at Sinai, because the Lord God delivered them from slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:12 to 15). And according to Jeremiah 31:31 to 34, as quoted in Hebrews 8:8 to 12, we are under a new covenant in Christ not like the first one. Hebrews 8:13 says, "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete." Romans 7 and verse 4 says, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." Now this new covenant comes through the blood of Christ, and we're no longer under the old covenant, which according to Exodus 34 and verse 28 includes the Ten Commandments. The church belongs to the Lord Jesus and follows the words of Jesus not Moses.

Sixth, they're organized the way the New Testament teaches. Acts 14:23 says Paul on his second missionary journey "appointed elders for them in every church." The church at Philippi had overseers and deacons (Philippians 1 verse 1). In the New Testament elders are also called overseers or bishops and function as shepherds or pastors. Many today call preachers "pastors"; but in the New Testament

pastors were elders not preachers. Now the church found in the New Testament didn't have a headquarters as some groups do today. Each congregation was autonomous and had its own leadership. No congregation was set above other churches.

And the early church never had a pope, or archbishop, a cardinal, or special class of priests, no. 1 Peter 2 verse 9 speaks of all Christians being a royal priesthood. In the early church, Christians didn't have to confess to a priest to have absolution. James 5:16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

Seventh, the church that Jesus built teaches the gospel that saves. Paul said in Galatians 1:6 to 9 that there's only one gospel and not another. Well, we need to know what that one gospel is! The first gospel sermon was preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. And when the guilty people came to believe that they were responsible for crucifying Jesus, they asked what to do to be forgiven. Peter responded in Acts 2:38 and 9, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for (that is in order to receive) the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." Now by the grace of God they were forgiven when they obeyed what the Holy Spirit said through the apostle Peter.

Someone says well, "A lot of time has passed by. How can we be sure that we're forgiven and part of the church Jesus purchased with His own blood?" Well, Peter answers how our souls are purified and how we are born again in 1 Peter 1:22 to 25. He says, Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. the grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the LORD endures forever." And this is the word which was preached to you. We aren't saved by the systems of men like infant baptism, a mourner's bench, or a sinner's prayer. We're saved by obeying the truth.

If we plant and obey the same seed of truth in this 21st century that was planted and obeyed in the first century, then our souls will be purified and we too will be born again. You see the seed, that is the word of God, is imperishable. It's the seed of the kingdom. Peter said in Acts 2 verse 39, "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." We are called by the gospel to come to Christ. When we obey the teaching, not adding to it, not taking away from it, and not substituting for it, then we have the same promise they had in the first century. Now just as they were saved and added to the Lord's church, so we can be saved and added.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we are thankful that though Your gospel we have the hope of eternal life. Help us to love You and to be obedient to Your word. And to Your word only. And Father help us to love each other and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

Many people today are searching for true Christianity. They want to be part of the Lord's church, the one that belongs to Him, the church you can read about in the New Testament. You know it is still around today. Don't be part of a religion that compromises the truth or has turned worship into entertainment. True Christianity doesn't twist the Scriptures. Oh they're not out for money-making. And they're not out to make people rich. There are more than 300 denominational groups, but you can't read of denominationalism in Scripture. True Christianity is denying yourself, taking up your cross

and following the Lord. You don't have to settle for religious myths or false hopes. You have the Scripture to guide you to the truth.

Some religious groups make laws God never made, and other churches ignore the instructions of Scripture. Some pick certain passages to build their doctrines while they ignore the other passages. Some twist the Scriptures to suit themselves. Jesus Christ is Lord and the only head of His church. And He rules, and nobody can change His teaching and still be saved. If the church belongs to Him, shouldn't we all want to be part of His church? If you can be added to the Lord's church, the church of Christ, why not become a member?

Forgiveness comes by the grace of God, but it's according to His terms. To be saved, believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, risen from the dead. And out of love for the Lord repent of your sins and turn to righteousness. Grace always works with repentance, and never without it. Confess your faith in Jesus and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins as Acts 2:38 teaches. Now repentance is something that we do, but baptism is God's work on us. It's how the grace of God works to forgive our sins and to add us to His church.

Now we hope that our seven reasons for the church of Christ, has opened for you a new way of thinking. 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 at 1-800-321-8633. There's also schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. SEARCH is on YouTube! And so subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry". We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money.

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.