

# THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

By: Bill Richardson

Edited by: Fay Camp

There are questions that arise from time to time concerning the church that you read about in the Bible; the church of the first century; the church that was identified by the Lord Jesus Christ, when He made the statement in, Matthew 16:18, “...I will build My church...” There are other questions asked, such as: When was the Lord’s church established? By who was it established? What creed does the Lord’s church use?

Many think the Lord’s church is just a denomination, but what does the Bible teach concerning His church? The church (singular) of Christ is found in the Bible some 80 times, churches (plural) are found some 38 times.

One can know the church of the Bible by studying the scriptures; it is the church you read about in the New Testament. We can know the founder; when and where the church was established; and how and why it is not a denomination, and other identifying features. The objective of this study presentation is to answer the questions that are troubling the heart (mind), of those who are concerned and want to know about the Lord’s church. Most important—we will learn why Christ built His church.

The statement made in Matthew 16:18 is the first time that the church is mentioned in the New Testament. Jesus made a promise, not only to Peter but to all mankind when He said, “...I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Jesus promised to build His church because at that time, it had not yet been built, but He said, “I will build My church.”

Christ said this would take place while some of those in the first century were still living. In Mark 9:1, Christ said, “Verily I say unto you, that there are some of them that stand here, which shall not taste death, till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power.”

Christ is the only one who has the right to “start” a church (i.e., be a founder). He has the right because He laid down His life for the church. He purchased the church with His own blood. In Acts 20:28, speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he (Christ) hath purchased with his own blood.” (Emphasis is, “MY- Mine”).

As the founder, Christ is the Head of the church. Ephesians 1:22-23 records, “And hath put all things under His 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.”

Colossians 1:18 also affirms that Christ is the head of the body and that the body is the church. Ephesians 4:4 plainly say, there is only ONE body. There are as many bodies as there are Gods. There are as many bodies as there are Christ’s (Lords). The Bible says there is only one, and that Christ is the head of the *one body* (cf. Ephesians 4:4-6).

When was the Church of Christ established? The great prophets of the Old Testament prophesied the establishment of the kingdom. In Isaiah 2:2 it is said, “And it

*shall come to pass in the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountain and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."*

Isaiah said that the "*mountain of the Lord's house*" shall be established in the last days. This is in reference to the "government" of the Lord or the Church. The last days has reference to the Christian age. Joel also records about the coming of the Kingdom in Joel 2:28-32. This was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost after the ascension of Christ (Acts 2).

In Acts 2:16 Peter said, "*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.*" He wanted the people to know that the events taking place on the day of Pentecost were the very event about which Joel prophesied.

The church (kingdom) was established in the first century on the first Day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Christ's church was founded at the scriptural place. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 2:3, "*And many people shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths.' 'For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.'*"

In giving the "great commission," Jesus said in Luke 24:47. "*...and that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*" In verse 49 of Luke 24 Jesus said, "*...but stay in the city, (Jerusalem) until you are clothed with power from on high.*" In Acts 1:8, Jesus speaking to the apostles said, "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be witness unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.*"

The apostles were told that the church would have its beginning in Jerusalem. It took place on Sunday morning at 9:00 AM on the day of Pentecost following the ascension of Christ back to heaven, (Lev. 23:15-16; Isaiah 3:3; Acts 2:15).

The Lord's Church wears the right name. We must always do that which exalts Christ. To wear a name that does not exalt the name of Christ is to disgrace the name of Christ. When we wear a human name, it undermines the authority of Christ. We wear the name "Church of Christ" because it is found in the Bible (Romans 16:16). Other names that identify the Lord's church are; the "*church of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:2); (2 Corinthians 1:1); the "*church of the living God*" (1 Timothy 3:15); the "*church of the Lord*" (Acts 20:28); the "*church of the firstborn*" (Hebrews 12:23). In Matthew 16:18 Jesus referred to the church as "*my church.*" Christ is the head of the church; likewise, the church takes Christ's name. Can it be anymore identifying or scripturally correct than that?

In Romans 16:16 we read, "*The churches of Christ Salute you.*" Paul mentions a multiplicity of congregations that were saluting the brethren at Rome. The phrase in Romans 16 has reference to the churches belonging to Christ. If you are not a member of the Lord's Church, does the name you wear exalt the name of Christ? If you are wearing a human name, you are dishonoring Christ.

As members of the body of Christ, we are given a name to wear. The name we wear is the name “CHRISTIAN.” There are three places in the Bible where the word Christian is used (Acts 11:26; 26:28; and I Peter 4:16). As Christians, if we do not call or identify ourselves by a Bible name, then we are not obeying God.

Names used in the Scriptures to designate the members of the Church of Christ with reference to their relationship with Christ and God are, “SAINTS” (Philippians 1:1; 4:21-22; 2 Corinthians 13:13; Colossians 1:2; and other references. “BRETHREN” is a name used in the Scriptures with reference to members and their relation to each other (James 1:2). (The word “Brethren” is used about two hundred times in the Bible).

The Lord’s Church, the church of Christ, is organized by the pattern set forth in the Bible. The church of Christ does not have an earthly headquarters where a group of men governs what we do or what we believe. The organization as set forth in the New Testament is: elders, deacons, preachers and members, and according to the Bible all are Saints (Phil. 1:1).

I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 list the qualifications for those men who are “elders” or “bishops.” The Greek word *episkopos* means “overseer” (Moulton’s Analytical Greek Lexicon, p. 160). Paul used this same word in Acts 20:28 when he told the elders of the church at Ephesus that they were “*overseers, to feed the church of God.*”

In I Timothy 3:8-13, Paul records the qualifications of the deacons. A deacon by definition means to “serve” or be a servant. Next in the organization, there are preachers or evangelist. In Ephesians 4:11 Paul wrote, “*And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelist, and some as pastors and teachers.*” Notice the separation between “evangelists” and “pastors.” A preacher is NOT the pastor; he is the “evangelist.” The word pastor means “overseer.” This has reference to the elders, not the preacher.

“Members” are next in the list of the organization. In I Corinthians 12:27 we read; “*Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.*” Romans 12:4, 5 records, “*For as we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one member’s one of another.*”

The Lord’s church, the church of Christ, is not a denomination. Many today believe the church of Christ is a mere denomination among hundreds of others. The word denomination means “division” and division has been condemned in the Bible. In I Corinthians 1:10 Paul writes, “*Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*” Paul said that we must speak the same thing, but that is not true among denominations. Paul also said, “*That there be NO divisions among you.*” In John 17, Jesus prayed for unity. Unity cannot be joined with division. This unity must be among believers through truth (Ephesians 4:1-6).

The church of Christ believes in restoring First Century Christianity and going back to the New Testament for the answers. Our guide is the inspired Word of God and not the creeds of men (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20).

Please know and act upon, by teaching and preaching the following truths:

- Jesus Christ built His Church, and it is the only church that you read about in the New Testament (Matthew 16:18).
- The Church you read about in the New Testament was built on Jesus Christ as the only foundation (Ephesians 2:20)
- The Church you read about in the Bible was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).
- The Church you read about in the Bible is the House of God (1 Peter 4:17)
- The Church you read about in the Bible is the Called Out (1 Peter 2:9; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Ephesians 1:18; 4:1).
- The church you read about in the Bible is composed of the saved that are added to it by the Lord who saved them.

When one hears, believes, repents, confesses Christ, and is baptized, he/she is added to the Church, thus they becomes a members of God's eternal kingdom, the Church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

Are you in the body of Christ, the house of God? Have you been called out of the world to live a new life in Christ? Obey the Gospel that you may be God's own possession (1 Peter 2:9).

One more great truth statement: The Lord will save only His Church, (Ephesians 5:23). Yes! It is the truth as told us by the Holy Word.

Question: Are you a member of the church of Christ? Christ's Church! The church you read about in the Bible! Christ's Church exists today! And His Church is the one and only true church, and it is the church we read of in the Bible.

There are enclosures to this writing which will help in this study. They are:

1. "What must I do to be saved", see pages 5 & 6. This is an outline prepared in a more compact detail than of what is said above. Good to use, along with your Bible, in teaching others. May God bless in our obedience in becoming a Christian and in teaching others.
2. "A church for All People", (see page 7 below)  
This is a Bulletin Article via, The West Side Church of Christ, Salem, VA
3. "The Gospel is Truth", (see page 8 below)  
By Ray Varner, Member, Church of Christ at North Cobb, Kennesaw, GA
4. "Man Will Live Again after His Earthly Existence", (see page 9 below)

I was blessed to write the above and again blessed to forward this whole package to you. I pray that God will continue to bless me and you as a reader and studier of "The Word"!

Please verify everything by God's Word, the Holy Bible! Amen! *Bill Richardson*

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

In order to be saved from sins, one must meet the conditions laid out by God. One must OBEY God to be saved. This involves the following acts of faith:

1. HEARING God's Word. (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:33)
2. BELIEVING in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6)
3. REPENTANCE of passed sins. (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30)
4. CONFESSING Christ as the Son of God. (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)
5. BAPTIZED, (immersed) into Christ for remission (forgiveness) of past sins. (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; and Romans 6:3-4)

**\*\*NOTE\*\*:** After obedience to the above five steps one must live faithful unto death and He will give you the crown of life (1 Peter 2:11-12; Revelation 2:10).

1). HEAR GOD'S WORD: *"How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?"* (Romans 10:14, 17) *"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God"*. It is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). Cornelius was told he had to HEAR the Word of God in order to be saved (Acts 11: 14).

Faith developed by hearing the Word precedes all acts that one must do to be saved. Faith is our confidence in and the realization of our dependence on and great need to be obedient to the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

To attain those attributes one must hear the Word and gain knowledge from the Word so as to know one's duty and responsibility.

This is such a great blessing! Always covet this great blessing when being taught to gain knowledge for obedience and teach this great-coveted blessing to others after their obedience.

Anytime the New Testament speaks of being saved "by faith," it is referring to a faith that includes whatever action God specifies as necessary. This is made clear in James 2:22: *"Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?"* Notice his concluding remarks: *"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* (James 2:24, 26)

2). BELIEVING: (Mark 16:16; Acts 16:30, 31; Romans 10:10), Faith alone will not save. The word of God must be believed (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3).

Faith in JESUS CHRIST developed into confessed belief is just the beginning. One must believe, and confess with their mouth, (Rom 10:10), that the LORD JESUS is the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16), and believe in your heart that He died, was buried and rose again from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Unless we believe in Jesus, we will die in our sins (John 8:24). You know your destiny if you did in your sins.

3). REPENTANCE: Man is a sinful creature! (Acts 17:30) teaches us that, *"In times past, time of ignorance God overlooked, but now HE commands all men everywhere to repent."* Repentance is expressed by remorse or regret for past wrongful acts done or of

the failure of not doing, and with determination changes to one's heart to do good and to do GOD'S will. Without repentance there is no forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; 3:19; Luke 13:3, 5).

4). CONFESSIOIN: (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32, 33), JESUS said, "*Who ever confess HIM before men, HE will confess them before MY FATHER who is in Heaven.*" The confession one makes is the belief that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of God and is essential to being saved (Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 10:32-33). The man from Ethiopia was told he could be baptized if he would first confess Christ (Acts 8:37). "*For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*" (Romans 10:10). Confession is no good in any other name but Jesus (Acts 4:12).

**\*\*NOTE\*\***: After these four steps you are still in your sins, but are ready to have them washed away by baptism (Acts 22:16).

5). BE IMMersed – WATER BAPTISM (Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-5). Immersion into water puts one into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). Salvation is only found in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). One's sins are washed away at baptism (Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:6, 17-18).

After the acts of 1 through 4 above one is baptized into Christ. Jesus died, was buried, and was resurrected on the third day. The act of baptism symbolizes a *death*, a *burial*, and a *resurrection*. So the question, "Why be baptized?"

A). for the remission of sins and to receive the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT

B). to be saved

C). to put on CHRIST in baptism

D). Then Christ will add you to His Church with the saved, (Acts 2:41, 47).

After the "Acts of Obedience" set forth above one becomes a Christian, you are saved and are added to the Lord's Church (Acts 2:41, 47); however, continued faithfulness to God and His word is essential. All of our past obedience will be to no avail if we forfeit it in rebellion to God. Only those who continue steadfast in the Lord will be saved (1 Corinthians 15:58; Rev. 2:10; Matthew 24: 13).

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

Jesus came from heaven for the express reason to "*seek and save the lost*" (Luke 19:10). Paul declares, "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). Everyone needs Jesus and without Him, there is NO salvation (Acts 4:12; John. 14:6).

Therefore, those that "*obey him*" (Hebrews 5: 9) are saved. Obeying Jesus involves *faith* (John 8:24), *repentance* (Luke 13:3, 5) *confession* (Mark 10:32, 33) and *baptism* (Mark 16:16). We must also remain faithful to Him (Revelation 2:10).

God will bless us in our obedience and diligence service. "*God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Pet. 3:9)

## A Church for All People

A Bulletin Article via  
The West Side Church of Christ, Salem, VA

Sad to say, some churches have limited the folks they would serve. By their very name some declare that they exist to serve certain ethnic, social or national groups. Conversely, the church which Christ built is unique because, by design, it is a church for all people.

There are no social distinctions. Paul reminded Christians in Galatia that there is neither bond nor free persons in Christ. All are one (Galatians 3:28).

There are no racial distinctions. In the same place Paul said there can be neither Jew nor Greek in the Lord's church (Galatians 3:28).

There are no economic distinctions. James rebuked those Christians who discriminated against the poor and fawned upon the rich. Such behavior was totally unacceptable in Christ (James 2:9).

There are no age distinctions. Christ made it clear that children were welcome in His kingdom (Matthew 19:13-14). The prophet Joel predicted that young and old alike have a place in the Messiah's kingdom (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17).

There are no political affiliations or agendas required in the church of Christ. His kingdom was and is "*not of this world*" (John 18:32). Christ's church is neither Republican nor Democratic its loyalty is to Him alone.

When these and other negative and undesirable aspects are eliminated, we are left with pure, unadulterated Christianity. That is what we strive for. With the Bible as our only guide and Christ as our only head, we can be the church He wants us to be. We need only trust and obey.

Share the good news. Tell your friends and neighbors about the pearl of great price you have found and invite them to come and see. **JHW**

P.S. Now I ask the question, "Who could not any one say Amen to such as this writing"?

Good folks, why not give this writing away. Give it to family, friends, neighbor and all you meet. If you should want more copies, please, just let me know and I will furnish you with as many copies as you give away. You may copy it; if you wish. Working together we can "run that old devil off"; so say I', *Bill Richardson!*

## THE GOSPEL IS TRUTH

By: Ray Varner, Member, Church of Christ at North Cobb, Kennesaw, GA

The Gospel is truth...In the Ephesians epistle Paul said, *"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another"* (Ephesians 4:25). Christians are admonished to put away falsehood and speak that which is truth (real and complete). Paul also said, *"...to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you"* (Galatians 2:5).

The Gospel (truth) is God's Word. Jesus said, *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). The truth is God's word active, which must be obeyed as first century Christians obeyed according to 1 Peter 1:22 where Peter said, *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren."*

Jesus also said, *"If a man desires to enter the Kingdom of God, he must be born again"* (John 3:5). James tells us that we are begotten (born again) by the word of God: *"Of his own will begat he with the Word of truth"* (James 1:18). *We are to walk in the truth of Gaius: "For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth of that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth"* (3 John 3).

We must remember the responsibility for not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25). When we do our part, we are obeying the Lord's command. Mark 12:30-31 says, *"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these."*

Have a great life serving our God!

*Ray Varner*

## MAN WILL LIVE AGAIN AFTER HIS EARTHLY EXISTENCE!

In Ecclesiastes 12:1-7, we have these words recorded:

1. "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near, when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them': 2. While the sun and the light, the moon, or the stars, are not darkened, and the clouds do not return after the rain: 3. In the days when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow down; When the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows grow dim; 4. When the doors are shut in the streets, and the sound of grinding is low; When one rises up at the sounds of the bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low; 5. Also they are afraid of height, and are afraid of terrors in the way; when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper is a burden and desire fail: for man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets. 6. Remember your creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well. 7. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it."

Here in those verses we have all the essential elements in view: Youth—Old age—Death, and man's responsibilities to God. But I want you to pay particular attention to what is said in verse 5. In that verse we have these words, "For man goes to his long home". The writer is saying here that man's course is finished and he is going into eternity. Earthly life as we know it will end and the body of man returns to dust and the spirit returns to the Creator.

In John 14:1-3, Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

These mansions that Jesus speaks of are in the "Father's house." This is the heavenly abode from which Christ came and to which he would return, and there He would prepare a home for all who love and serve Him.

Verse 3 has reference to the second coming of Christ. Christ will one day come to take His children home to Heaven. Dear friend our next destination is heavenly, not earthly. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8 the apostle Paul writes: "For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day, (Now notice), and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Paul was ready to depart this life and go to be with the Lord. In the Army of the Lord, he had fought battles and won victories for Christ. He had finished his course and above all he had kept the faith. Paul knew that God had a crown of life for him and for all others who loved the appearing of Christ.

Let me ask you a question! "Are you as sure of that crown of life as Paul was?" "Have you fought battles and won victories for Christ?" "Are you keeping the faith?" (If one has confessed Christ, as the Son of God, been baptized for the remission of sins, thus being in Christ, Christ's Body, and lived a faithful life of service to Him, Christ will take you to the Heavenly Father when He returns again). (Selected)