

The Church You Can Read About in the Bible

How to become a member of the church you can read about in the Bible

Intro: This year one of our themes is "The church you can read about in the Bible."

In our first lesson we looked at what the church is, arriving at these conclusions:

The church always identifies people...people who have been saved.
The saved who assemble together are identified as the church of Christ in that place.

In our section lesson we looked at the promise of Jesus to build His church arriving at these conclusions:

Jesus would die to provide a sacrifice for the sins of the world.
On the third day He would be raised victorious over the powers of Hades proving that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God.
On the basis of His sacrifice and resurrection, the foundation would be laid to build His church, a group of people who belong to Him.
The apostles of Jesus would be given ruling authority over the church through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
The Lord's church was established on the Day of Pentecost as people responded to Peter's proclamation of the gospel.

I want to be a part of that church Jesus promised to build. Do you? With these principles in mind let us answer the question, "How can we become a member of that church you can read about in the Bible?"

The Lord added to the church those who were being saved

Since it is the church that Christ promised to build, then only He can determine who is a member.

Sometimes you hear people talk about "joining the church." What I think most people mean by that is that they feel they should take some initiative in becoming a member of the church. However, we have to understand also that, since the church is the Lord's, then He controls the membership and does the adding, not men. That is reflected in the language of Scripture:

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41)

Did you notice that Luke uses the passive voice, "were added." That means that someone else did the adding.

And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47)

The Lord adds to His church those whom He also saves.

Since salvation is the Lord's work, the Lord adds the saved to the church.

So in the Scripture, the church is the body of the saved.

“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. (Eph. 5:23–24)

“for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. (Eph. 5:29–30)

Notice that those who are saved become members of the body of Christ.

The Lord had already provided everything needed for people to be saved.

He had offered His life as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.

He had been raised from the dead as proof that He was the Son of the Living God.

He had ascended to heaven to begin His rule at the Father's right hand over His kingdom.

He had sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles as they declared the way into His church (kingdom). The coming of the Spirit upon them and the tongues with which they praised God confirmed that the Lord's promise had been fulfilled. This firmly established their credibility as Jesus' spokesmen and witnesses of the resurrection.

So then Peter along with the eleven began to preach the gospel.

Sinners were being saved by responding to the gospel

They heard the gospel about Jesus Christ

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: (Ac. 2:22)

It was Jesus' plan to save people through the preaching of the gospel.

““No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” It is written in the prophets, ‘AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. “Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.” (John 6:44–46)

Peter related to them the facts of gospel of first importance.

First he affirmed that God had shown His approval of Jesus through the miracles that he had performed during His ministry. *Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—” (Acts 2:22)*

Second he affirmed that the Jews had rejected Him and had crucified him by the Romans.

“this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” (Ac. 2:23)

Third he affirmed that God raised Jesus up from the dead. *And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” (Acts 2:23–24)*

Fourth he affirmed that Jesus had ascended to heaven and was enthroned at the right hand of God ruling over His kingdom.

“Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,’ (Acts 2:33–34)

Peter confirmed these facts by appealing to the OT prophecies and by the apostles' eye-witness testimony. The audience had heard what they needed to know about Jesus. Peter urged them to accept in faith these facts based on the evidence Peter had given.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:36, NASB)

But would they believe Peter's message? Indeed they did!

They believed the gospel message about Jesus.

We know this because of their reaction.

“Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ (Ac. 2:37)

The Jews reaction that day indicated two things about them:

Their understanding of Peter's message meant that they had murdered the very one who had come to be their Savior.

Can you imagine the pain that would bring to these people who had so longed for a deliverer? That pain is indicated in Luke's expression, "they were pierced to the heart." Luke uses a Greek word that was used in Greek literature for someone being stabbed! Such was the emotional pain of these Jews who had come to realize that they had committed a grievous sin against the one God sent to save them.

Their understanding that day meant that they accepted the facts of Jesus, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and reign just as Peter had described them. If not, they could have easily pointed to Jesus' tomb if Peter's message was not true!

And this is the expected response of any person who seeks to be saved.

Jesus himself had said that those who did not believe in Him as the Christ would die in their sins.

“I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” And so they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, “What have I been saying to you from the beginning?” (John 8:24–25)

Having expressed their faith In Jesus as the resurrected Lord, they wanted to know what they could do in light of their great mistake.

And Peter answers:

"And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38-39)

They repented of their sins against the Lord

The sin most on their mind was crucifixion of Christ; but Peter had made clear that all their sins could be forgiven if they would repent of them.

The word repent means "to change one's mind" resulting in a change of life. From this point on, they would let their faith in Jesus guide their conduct, being obedient to Him as their Lord.

They were baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of sins

Keep in mind that baptism was no strange ordinance to these Jews.

John had baptized in Aenon (Jn. 3:23) because there was much water there. Jesus also had made and baptized disciples (Jn. 4:1-4). There was no need to explain the nature of the act itself for that was well known through the past practice of John and Jesus as well as the meaning of the word itself "to dip, or immerse."

Peter stresses three things about baptism:

That this immersion was "in the name of Jesus"

That is when one obeys the command, he acknowledges that Jesus is Christ and Lord. In baptism we declare that we cannot save ourselves but that He can save us!

In baptism we declare that from that moment on He will be our Lord and we will obey him!

That it is for "everyone"

Peter made no allowances for anyone to exclude it. In fact, he commanded everyone to do it.

However it is for everyone who believes and repents.

That the purpose for the baptism was not to show that Jesus had already saved them, but rather "for the remission of sins".

And their response is clear:

"So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Ac. 2:41)

The KJV "gladly received" better reflects the nuance of the word Luke uses. It was commonly used for example of favorably welcoming or receiving a guest into one's home.

To say that they were baptized is to say that they had accepted all that Peter had said and commanded of them (believing the message, acknowledging their faith in Jesus, and repenting of sin as well as being baptized).

Now having responded to the gospel, Luke tells us what resulted--"they were added about three thousand souls." Lord added them to His church. They had become members of the church of Christ.

Conclusion: Here then is the answer to our question: How can we become a member of the church you can read about in the Bible?

If you today were to obey this same message, what church would God add you to? The very same church. If you want to be saved and become a member of the Lord's church, we'll be happy to assist you in doing that. In fact everything is prepared for you to do that right now.