

BROAD MINDEDNESS

-L. R. Wilson

**WHY I AM
A MEMBER OF THE
LORD'S CHURCH**

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Front Cover

WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

The facts that are presented are *my* reasons for being a member of the Church of Christ. If the evidence is strong enough to merit your accepting the conclusions reached, I pray that you, too, may become a non-denominational member of the Lord's church. If the evidence is too weak, reject the conclusions and seek stronger evidence from God's Word. Accept only the Bible as divine authority, since it is the only God-given blueprint of His true church.

First, We Must Study God's Word

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). There, then, is the division that must be made at the right place.

What part does the Old Testament play in salvation or where shall we "rightly divide" the Bible?

"Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ; that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

"Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

"Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace" (Ephesians 2:15).

"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by the law, you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4).

Therefore, I cannot find any binding reasons for what I do regarding salvation in the old law. Where, then, shall I look?

"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as he is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was estab-

lished on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says, 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the

hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, *Know the Lord*, for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:6-13).

"And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives" (Hebrews 9:15-17). Christ had to die before His new will was binding.

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. This he said, signifying by what death He would die" (John 12:32, 33). The lifting up, of course, is on the cross.

"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" (John 14:2).

This is, then, what ultimate salvation means, the inheriting of one of these prepared mansions for a prepared people.

"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' " (Matthew 25:34).

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If we are to inherit this prepared mansion where there will be no sin, we must find out how to become sin-free or "set apart."

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). So we are not made free by some "feeling" we received at a mourner's bench, or while "down in the corn field," but by God's eternal truth.

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12). I, then, must look to the New (Law) Testament for my reasons.

Let Us Explore How God's Word Teaches

1. By *Specific Command*. Such as the Ten Commandment Law which contains "thou shall" or "thou shall not."
2. By *Approved Example*. Such as in I Corinthians 11:1: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." Jesus left us the perfect example (I Peter 2:21).
3. By *Necessary Inference*. Such as in Genesis 6:14—"Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch." This surely infers that absolutely nothing but gopher wood was acceptable.

We might reflect here on the argument presented by some that "the scriptures do *not* say specifically *not* to" (the underlying thought being, if not specifically prohibited it is allowed). This line of reasoning is beyond my comprehension.

When God told Moses to speak to the rock—"Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals" (Numbers 20:8), there was not specific "thou shall not strike" it. But, I believe all agree, anything but speaking was prohibited by *necessary inference*.

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To see how severe God's punishment was for this going beyond that which was commanded, read number 20:12: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.' " And Numbers 27:14—"For in the wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes. (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)" *Adding* something to where God's Word is *silent* is therefore called "disbelief" and "rebellion." Many other examples of this principle could be given if space permitted.

We therefore have a responsibility to (1) do what God commands us, (2) abide by scriptural examples, and (3) observe inferred instructions.

Just How Important is the Church?

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). (My wife wears my name.)

"Greet one another with a holy kiss. The church of Christ greet you" (Romans 16:16). The church can scripturally be referred to as the bride of Christ. The church was important enough for Christ to die for it.

Let us observe these important facts in summary of what has been said:

1. I cannot depend on "feelings" for salvation. "There is a way that seems right" (Proverbs 14:12).
2. I cannot look to the Old Testament for my pattern for living and worship. (Ephesians 2:15—it was abolished).
3. I cannot depend on tradition (Matthew 15:9—in vain they worshipped him, doctrine of men.)
4. I cannot have my "good old . . . religion." (I Peter 4:17—what will the end be if they obey not the gospel.)

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5. I must depend on God's book, specifically the New Testament, for my reasons for what I do religiously (John 12:48-50). We are to read the Old Testament for learning (Galatians 3:24, Romans 15:4).

My Reasons For Being A Member Of The Church of Christ

I want to be saved—become an heir to salvation. Saved people are God's children; God's children are "in Christ" (in the church); if "in Christ," then we are baptized into Christ.

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29). So, the Church is the saved and, if I am a member of the church, I am "saved."

There are too many people that have a *building* in mind as the Church. The "called out" of every nation are the Church. If we would quit using the term "go to church" and use "go to church services," maybe this could become clearer. Let me assure you that I am not a member of a building. I am a member of the Church of Christ because it is:

1. Scriptural in **Name**. "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The Churches of Christ salute you" (Romans 16:16).
2. Scriptural in **Organization**: (1) Has elders that meet scriptural qualifications, over the local congregations. The term pastor, elder, or bishop is the very same office. "So when they had appointed elders, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23). "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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" (Acts 20:28). "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine"

(I Timothy 5:17). An unmarried person, or one who had not proven his ability by ruling his children does not qualify. See Titus 1:6-9. (2) Has deacons serving under elders (I Timothy 3:8ff). (3) Has preachers serving under elders and called scriptural names. Can be called a minister (Romans 15:16); preacher (I Timothy 2:7); evangelist (Acts 21:8); or possibly a pastor (if the qualifications specified earlier are met). "He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever; holy and awesome [reverend] is His name" (Psalm 111:9). This is the only time reverend is mentioned and it refers to God.

Scriptural in **Worship**. (1) Have *prayer*—"Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17). "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (I Timothy 2:8). (2) *Singing* unaccompanied (no instrument used, see No. 3, page 3). "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30). "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). I cannot find where a choir can obey the commend "sing" for me.

(3) *Giving* (on the first day of the week). "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that their be no collections when I come" (I Corinthians 16:2). "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7). I cannot find "tithing" taught in the New Testament.

(4) *Lord's Supper*—"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight (Acts 20:7). This surely did not represent a "common meal" for this is condemned in I Corinthians 11:34: "But if anyone is hungry, let him eat as home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come." (5) *Bible study*—(preaching or teaching doctrine). "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

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4. Scriptural in **Terms of Entrance into the Church**. One must: (1) *Hear* (the preaching of God's Word). "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in who they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of who they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:13-14). (2) *Believe* (that Jesus is the Christ). "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). "But without faith it is

impossible to please Him; for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).

(3) *Repent* (turn away or turn again) of past sins. "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). (4) *Confess* (that Jesus is the Christ). "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before my father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). "Also I say to you, who ever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God (Luke 12:8). "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

(5) Be *baptized* (before saved from sins). "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' " (Acts 2:38). "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 3:21).

The Lord adds us to His church when we comply with His conditions. We cannot "join" His Church. "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Nowhere can a verse be found that we believe *into*, confess *into*, repent *into* (all are *to*, *unto*, or "pointing toward"), but we are *baptized* into Christ.

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Summary

We have a responsibility to know God's way:

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

All those who do not "obey the gospel" shall suffer eternal punishment (I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 2:8).

Yes, I am a member of the Church of Christ because:

1. It recognizes the Bible only as authority in religious matters (John 12:48-50).
2. It looks only to the law now in effect for what God expects of us today (Hebrews 7:12).

3. It is scriptural in name, organization, items of worship, and conditions which we may enter the Church.
4. It pleased for unity of all religious groups on the basis of the Bible only (John 17:17-21).

Conclusion

1. If you cannot find the name of the church you belong to in the Bible, will you reject its name?
2. If you cannot find the organization set-up of the church you belong to in the Bible, will you reject it?
3. If you cannot find the items of worship in the church you belong to in God's Word, will you reject them?
4. If you find the church you go to allowing preachers to base salvation on anything other than the total of what God commands, will you reject it?
5. Will you be just a plain New Testament Christian that God may add you to His Church?

—Tirey G. Samsill
Businessman

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