WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION: Why I am a member of the church of Christ. What follows also answers the question “Why am I a member of the church of Christ?” And in like manner answers “Why should you be a member of the church of Christ?”

When I say church of Christ, I do not mean a name as the denominations carry. But a designation of possession, that is what church of Christ means. The church belonging to Christ.

1 Peter 3:15, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

What is to be set forth is to be an answer (defense) of the spoken often unspoken questions previously stated.

This will not be an exhaustive list, but I have tried to “boil the issue down” to 5 important points and even these, we will just touch on because of time.

I. IT IS RIGHT IN ITS BUILDER.
A. Matthew 16:13-19 (Read)
B. Thus the church we read of in the NT was built on that great bedrock of Truth that Jesus is the Son of God.
C. Some would have the church built on Peter.
   1. Peter – “PETROS”: A small stone (masculine)
   2. rock – “PETRA”: A bedrock; a solid rock (feminine)
D. Did Jesus build what He promised to build? Yes indeed!
   1. Previous to Acts chapter 2 the church is spoken of in prospect – will build.
   2. After Acts 2 the church is spoken of as a reality. Added to the church. Acts 2:47
E. Even though they would put to death Jesus (gates of hell [Hades]), Jesus would build his church. This promise became reality on Pentecost in 33 AD.
F. Someone may claim, “Jesus built the church I am a member of.”
G. Let’s test that statement. The fact a religious body exists is proof that it was founded by someone. There are today many, many churches (possibly 1000) each was either scripturally or unscripturally founded. If the church was founded by an unscriptural builder, that church must of necessity be unscriptural; the work of man and not of Christ. Their own statements:

1. LUTHERAN
   The ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – JDS), along with other Lutheran churches, can trace its roots directly to the Protestant Reformation that took place in Europe in the 16th century. Martin Luther, a German monk, became aware of differences between the Bible and church practices of the day. His writings, lectures and sermons inspired others to protest church practices and call for reform. http://www.elca.org/communication/roots.html

2. PRESBYTERIAN
   Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation. Our heritage, and much of what we believe, began with the French lawyer John Calvin (1509-1564), whose writings crystallized much of the Reformed thinking that came before him. http://www.pcusa.org/101/
3. **METHODIST**  
The United Methodist Church shares a common history and heritage with other Methodist and Wesleyan bodies. The lives and ministries of John Wesley (1703–1791) and of his brother, Charles (1707–1788), mark the origin of their common roots.  
http://karchives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=522

4. **BAPTIST**  
American Baptists, Southern Baptists and all the scores of other Baptist bodies in the U.S. and around the world grew out of a common tradition begun in the early 17th century.  
http://www.abc-usa.org/Resources/history.doc

5. **CHURCH OF GOD**  
It was 1886, in a crude meeting house on the Tennessee-North Carolina border, where the Church of God traces its roots.  
http://www.churchofgod.org/about/history.cfm

6. **NAZARENE**  
The Church of the Nazarene traces its anniversary date to 1908. Its organization was a marriage that, like every marriage, linked existing families and created a new one.  
http://www.nazarene.org/ministries/administration/visitorcenter/history/display.aspx

By their own admission, these religious bodies were established many, many centuries after the Lord built His church – the church of Christ. Any church built by the wrong builder at the wrong time cannot be the right church.

Jesus established His church, not a denomination!

**II. IT IS RIGHT IN ITS SOURCE OF AUTHORITY.**

A. Ephesians 1:20-23 *(Read)*  
B. The Bible teaches that the church has one head – Christ.  
   1. Colossians 1:18, “And he is the head of the body, the church”.  
   2. Ephesians 5:23-25, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”

C. Not a pope, not ecclesiastical authority. Christ is head and governs by His word.  
D. Many in the religious world look to creeds, synods, church manuals, confessions of faith, decisions of conventions, so called inner leadings, and other humanly established rules.  
E. What the Bible claims for itself cannot be overlooked in its authority to govern the church.  
   1. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good work”, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.  
   2. 1 Corinthians 14:37, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”
F. The following can be said of the Bible only – “This old book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its histories are true, its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the sailor’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven is opened and the gates of hell are disclosed. Christ is its subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor and condemns all who trifle with its holy contents.” – Anon.

G. No man made creed can make such a claim.

III. IT IS RIGHT IN ITS CHURCH GOVERNMENT.
A. Philippians 1:1 (Read)
B. The organization of the church is a monarchy. As we have seen Christ is the head of the church. Hence He is called the King.
   1. 1 Timothy 6:15 calls Jesus the, “blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords”
C. In the NT we read that each congregation had a plurality of elders if there were men qualified. The qualifications are set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
D. In the terms used we see the duties that apply to elders:
   1. Elder/ presbyter – maturity, i.e. spiritually mature.
   2. Shepherd/pastor – indicating the care & concern for the spiritual welfare of the flock.
   3. Overseer/bishop – pointing to the authority of these men, the rule appointed to them.
E. We also see Deacons serving under the leadership of the elders. (Servants)
F. There is no case in the New Testament, where one man served as the elder or the bishop or the pastor over one congregation. Nor is there a case where one man served as the elder or the bishop or the pastor over a group of congregations. There is no case in the New Testament where a group of elders (presbyters) or bishops or pastors was over a plurality of churches. If you find either of the foregoing situations of the church government in a church, you will know you have not found the New Testament church.
G. Sometimes congregations have situations where for a time they are without elders and deacons. The work of the Lord can and must go on under the temporary arrangement of the “business meeting”; in this situation this becomes an expedient.
H. Let me also encourage such a congregation to pray without ceasing and work towards the day when they again have leadership according to the NT pattern. The flock will be better benefited, the congregation will reap greater spiritual rewards, and most importantly, it is the way God has commanded.
IV. IT IS RIGHT IN ITS WORSHIP.

A. Colossians 3:17 (Read)

B. Whatsoever we do in word or action do all by the authority of Christ. When it comes to anything we do in religion we need a “thus saith the Lord” for it.

C. Do we have Bible authority for what we do in worship?

1. Singing – Ephesians 5:19, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”

2. Praying – 1 Timothy 2:1-2, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “Pray without ceasing.”

3. Lord’s Supper – Acts 20:7, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

4. Preaching – Acts 20:7; 2 Timothy 4:1-4, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

5. Giving – 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him” 2 Corinthians 9:7, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

I. Some would change the simplicity of NT worship by either adding mechanical instruments to our music, or would partake of the Lord’s Supper at a wedding, or would have the church funded by garage sales or other means not found in God’s Word. They attempt to justify it by saying, “The Bible doesn’t say not to do it.”

J. Illus: Privilege to eat dinner with the Short family on Sunday – Sister Maggie sends me to the store to get a gallon of milk – return with gallon of milk, dozen eggs, 2 packages of cookies, bag of diapers, pack of pencils, lb of liver loaf – She says why did you buy this – I say you didn’t tell me not to buy it.

K. Not only do I deserve the whoopin’ I am about to receive because I have disobeyed her instructions, I have rebelled against her authority.

L. This is used to illustrate that when the Lord specifies what is to be done, when it is to be done, and how it is to be done, to do otherwise is not only disobedience but out right rebellion.

V. IT IS RIGHT IN ITS PLAN OF SALVATION.

A. The church of Christ preaches the one true Gospel of salvation provided by God’s grace and tells people plainly what the scriptures require of those who believe, in order for them to be saved.

B. There are many things taught in the denominational world in regard to salvation. Man has taught everything on salvation from baptismal regeneration to faith only; from predestination to universalism; from salvation by works to salvation by grace only.

C. In response to the question. “What Must I Do To Be Saved?”, men have been told to:

1. “just accept Jesus as your personal saviour”
2. “just say this prayer”
3. or even “simply believe and ask Jesus into your heart”

D. You hear everything else except the simple answer recorded in the NT.
   1. Believe – John 8:24
   3. Confess – Matthew 10:32
   5. Will be added to the Lord’s church – Act 2:47
   6. Be Faithful – Revelation 2:10

E. Dear friends, following the NT only will not make one a member of a denomination. Many in the denominations claim to be following the NT. And it is true that some of what they do and how they live is according to the NT. But nobody ever became a member of a denomination be following the NT only. No denomination was ever formed by following the NT only.

F. The Lord never added anyone to a denomination.

CONCLUSION
A. The Lord only built one church.
   1. Ephesians 4:4, “There is one body”
   2. Colossians 1:18, “And he is head of the body, the church.”
   3. If there is one body, and that one body is the church, the inescapable conclusion is that there is one church.

B. If the church of which I am a member, when held to the Light of God’s Word is:
   1. Right in its Builder.
   2. Right In Its Source of Authority.
   3. Right in Its Organization.
   4. Right in Its Worship.
   5. Right in Its Plan of Salvation.

C. It has to be the right church (the church that Jesus bought and paid for) and cannot be wrong.

D. Won’t you obey God’s Plan of Salvation and the Lord will add you to HIS church, the church of Christ.

Sermon by Jerry D. Sturgill
Many books, sermons and articles have been studied over the years by this Bible student on this topic. Full credit is given to 1) the Bible, upon which all teaching is to be based, 2) those preachers and teachers I have sat at the feet of and been instructed from their spoken and written word and 3) as always to God be the glory!