WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST here in LaGrange, Georgia

 Why I am a member of the Lord’s church? My answer is that I want to go to heaven to be with my Lord. I am a sinner. God gave me a way to have my sins forgiven through His promise made long ago. That promise is the hope of eternal life with God. Let’s **read Titus 1:1-3**

 My desire is for everyone to receive the same promise. But we can’t do it on **our terms**. We must do it on God’s terms. That is why it is important for the young people and really, all of us here, to understand and give an answer as to why we come to this place to worship our God. There are other buildings around us that claim to worship God. They have a lot of things going on that will sway your thinking and tickle your ears. Many will call it a good work. They might say “I am using my talents for the Lord. But by what authority do they do what they do? Is it of man or of God? We will have to give an answer to God in the Day of Judgment for what we did in this life. Let’s explore why we are here instead of somewhere else.

 I want to cover eight points this morning to show that “worshipping at the church of your choice” is not from God but from men. I will go through these points quickly, but if you have questions at the end of the services, I will be glad to talk to you about what the Bible teaches.

**Point 1...**This church was *founded* by the builder Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. The fact that a religious body exists is proof that it was founded by someone. There is in the world today a multiplicity of churches, different in origin, doctrine and practice; therefore each was either scripturally or unscriptural founded by either the divine or human builder. They have been called denominations because different people choose to worship God in different ways. If a church was founded by an unscriptural builder that church must of necessity be unscriptural. It is the work of man and not Christ. Matthew 16:18 says, “…upon this rock I will build My church”. This is Christ speaking, showing that no church can be scriptural or His unless founded by Christ. If a church was founded by Henry VIII, “Episcopal”, John Smyth (Baptist), John Wesley (Methodist) or Joseph Smith (Church of the Latter Day Saints), it is not the church built by Christ.

**Point 2…**The church was founded at Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When the apostles received the Holy Spirit, they were able to preach Christ in multiple languages…formerly common fisherman…that were authorized by Jesus to preach to the people salvation through Christ. When the people obeyed and received salvation, they were added to the Lord’s church.

 Read Acts 2:41, 46-67. There is nothing here to indicate multiple churches with multiple *names* and multiple beliefs. It is one church with saved believers having all things in common, vs. 44.

 Even during the early days as churches were being established, there had to be clarification of what was meant to be saved. Let’s look at **Acts 19 vs. 1 to 7.** Twelve men were baptized according to the baptism of John. Paul baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus.

 There was an issues by certain Jews that said you had to be circumcised in order to be saved. Let’s read **Acts 15 vs. 1-2.** Paul and Barnabas went to the apostles in Jerusalem to understand what should be the teaching on this. A letter was sent back to the churches. Let’s read **Acts 15 vs. 23 to 29.** The church, the kingdom centered on what was expected of them from their king, Jesus Christ.

Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ made it clear that there is only one body.

**Read Ephesus 4:4-6**. There is only one body, the church

**Point 3.** It has a scriptural designation & organization. The church has no special name, but is spoken of in several ways:

1. My church, Matt. 16:18
2. The church, Acts 8:1 [the church that belongs to Christ]
3. The word church means “the called out people”
4. Church of God, 1 Cor. 1:2
5. Churches of Christ, Romans 16;16
6. The body of Christ, Eph. 4:12
7. The church of the living God, 1 Tim. 3:15
8. Church of the firstborn, Heb. 12:23

We have the name church of Christ because it is the church that has the founder, Jesus Christ.

 As far as organization, Christ’s church is a monarchy. Jesus is the supreme head of the body, the church. **Read Col. 1:16-18**. The Bible teaches that elders were ordained in every church, **Tit. 1:5.** In **Acts 20:17**, we read that Paul “called to him the elders of the church”. So each church had a plurality of elders. These elders had to meet certain requirements to be elders. Not just anyone could serve. Their job was to “feed the church of the Lord, (Acts 20:28); help the weak (Acts 20:35); exhort in sound doctrine and convict the gainsayers (Titus 1:9).

Let’s read the qualifications of elders found in **Titus 1:5-11**.

 There are deacons who have a leadership responsibility in the church. Let’s read their qualifications in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

**Point 4…** There is no convention or earthly organization that controls what the church believes such as the Pope.

The church is not a denomination. It does not have other documents that tell us how the church should act, or live or believe. The Baptist doctrine is the Baptist creed. The Methodists have the book of Disciple. The Mormons have the Book of Mormon. None of these documents have any authority from God. Only man gives authority to these documents. Most people that belong to these organizations do not even know that these documents exist.

The only creed we have here is the Bible.

**Point 5…**The Bible teaches the kingdom (the church) is established and Christ now reigns over it.

 In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught the disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom: “Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come…” (Matt. 6:9-10). Christ taught the kingdom would come during the lifetime of His apostles. In Mark 9:1, Jesus said the kingdom would come with power. This power came to the apostles in Jerusalem on Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, Acts 2:1-4.

 Religions today teach that the kingdom has not been established. They use verses in Revelation to say that Jesus will come back to earth and reign for a thousand years. There is nothing in the Bible that teaches this.

**Point 6…**I attend this church here because the church follows the scriptures of what I must do to be saved.

1. Man is saved by faith, but not faith only
2. Man is saved through the blood of Christ, and through Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. He overcame death.
3. Our sins separated us from God. Jesus gave us the way to overcome sin, to have our sins forgiven. All we have to do is to do His will. We must [believe in Him], repent, [and confess Him]. We must obey by being baptized for the remission of our sins. We must continually seek to do the will of Christ. We are added to this church, the church that Christ built. We are not voted in; we do not follow any infant baptism doctrine. The bible does not say you are saved at the point of believing. We follow the word of God. Our belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God gives us faith. Our belief causes us to act in repentance that we have sinned against God. We confess or make public that we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. We are baptized to come into contact with the blood of Christ and have our sins washed away. As part of His church, we continue to learn God’s will and teach it to others. The book of Acts has more than 10 conversion examples showing that all become Christ’s disciples the same way. Or in simple terms, we become Christians just as the church at Antioch.

 You don’t just believe.

 You don’t touch the TV

 You don’t say “The Sinner’s Prayer”

 You do what is taught in scripture that teaches us the word from God through Jesus Christ to follow, not man’s easy & convenient ways.

**Point 7…**The bible teaches the observance of the Lord’s Supper.

Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. Let’s **read 1 Cor. 11:23-26**.

The Lord’s Supper is a memorial which teaches the second coming of Christ. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death *till he comes***.** [1 Cor. 11:26] It is a memorial that teaches the new covenant, “This cup is the *new covenant* in my blood”, 1 Cor. 11:25

When we talk about how often we partake we read that as often as we partake it, we remember Christ’s death. Vs 26 of the same chapter. We remember how we were now able to have our sins forgiven.

Is it often or not so often? Partaking of the Lord’s Supper should be an honor and a privilege. It is not something that man should regulate or control. Is our authority from God or man? In Acts 20:7, we have an example of the saints of Troas coming together on the first day of the week. There they partook of the Lord’s Supper. That example tells me that “often” means every first day of the week. Men choose to vary partaking or not partaking at all. Some take only on special occasions like Easter or Christmas. What is the purpose of the Lord’s Supper? What do we want to remember? What Jesus did for us as sinners should answer that question.

**Point 8…**We don’t use instruments of music. The world would say, “Don’t you like the piano, the organ, the guitar, the drums, trumpets, horn and flute?” “I have a talent and want to use my ability to play these musical instruments. Should I be held back and not play these for the Lord?”

 Is what you say from God or man? The simple answer is that Jesus does not authorize the use of musical instruments in His worship. I am going to read to you all the scripture of the music mentioned in the New Testament:

1. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives [Matt. 26:30[
2. But about midnight, Paul & Silas were praying and singing hymns to God [Acts 16:25]
3. Therefore will I give praise unto you among the Gentiles and sing unto your name [Rom. 15:9]
4. I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also [1 Cor. 14:15]
5. Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord [Eph. 5:19]
6. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God [Col. 3:16]
7. In the midst of the congregation will I sing praise to You [Heb. 2:12]
8. Through Him then, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, which make confession to His name[Heb. 13:15
9. Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful, let him sing praise. [James 5:13]

So what we do in the church of Christ…is it of God or of men?

Folks, we will have to give an answer to what we do in this life. If it is not of God, don’t do it. Don’t fall into the trap of “any church will do”

Young people, in your future years you may want to marry someone that worships God according to man’s ways. If you succumb to their beliefs, you can become eternally lost. Stick to God’s way, and if need be, teach and convert your future partner to God’s way. This is one area that you do not compromise. Follow the Lord’s pattern.

For those here who are not Christians, I ask that you consider your soul now. Are you right with God?

Are you part of Christ’s church now?

If not, do you believe that Jesus is Christ is the Son of God?

Will you repent of your sins and be baptized for remission of sins?

Will you come as we stand and sing?