

JESUS BUILDS HIS CHURCH

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Jesus Christ promised that He would build His church. (Matthew 16:18) What is a Church and how does Jesus build His?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

A "church" is a collection of people. In fact, the word literally means "called out" and it is not just a religious word. The idea is that people who are "called out" are called into an assembly. Through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, Jesus calls people out of sin and into Jesus' group of saved people.

In the New Testament book of Acts, chapter 2, we can read about the birthday of the church of Christ. In verse 47 of that chapter, it is said that Jesus adds the saved to his church. This is HOW Jesus builds His church, one saved person at a time. You see, Jesus does not save by group, that is, Jesus does not save a group of people all together at the same time. Jesus saves people one person at a time. Salvation is personal! Therefore, Jesus adds to and is right now building His church just one person at a time?

Now if **faith** were the only prerequisite for salvation, then a whole group of people might begin believing at the same time, just like that group did who heard Peter and the apostles preaching on Pentecost, the day Jesus began building His church. You see, the record says that "they (the hearers) were pricked in their hearts" when they heard the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:37). When they asked the apostles what they should do, Peter replied "Repent." Well, if faith and repentance were the only prerequisites for salvation, then it is possible that this group might make up their minds to repent all in the same moment. But Peter also said, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." (Acts 2:38) Those people possibly could believe at the same time and repent at the same time, but they could only be baptized one at a time! That group of people would have to be baptized one person at a time. Now all the apostles might be baptizing people at the same moment, but each individual was to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of his or her sins. Remission of sins is personal salvation! Remission of sins is sweet personal forgiveness! And forgiveness is received by an individual when that person, driven by faith and repentance,

comes to the water of baptism and is immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. The Lord Jesus then adds the saved person to His body, the church.

Jesus' apostle Paul put it this way, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13 KJV) The one body into which people are baptized is the church of Jesus Christ. Paul put it another way in his letter to the Galatian Christians: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27 KJV) To be baptized into Christ is the same thing as being baptized into Jesus' body and that body is Jesus' church. Jesus builds His church one baptized repentant believer at a time.

When one believing, repentant person is baptized in a city, a village, a country, wherever, then, a new church member is born of the water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)! That's right! What does this new member do now? He or she looks for other Christians with whom the new Christian can assemble.

Yes, Jesus has commanded assemblies of His saved people. Jesus said "**For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.**" (Matthew 18:20 ESV) Jesus expects the saved people in a particular geographical location to "gather" in Jesus' name. These saved people live in proximity to one another. This local gathering is also called a "church." In the New Testament we find churches of Christ gathered in widespread geographical locations: Jerusalem, Samaria, Damascus Syria, Antioch of Syria, to list only a few. We Christians are supposed to locate and identify one another so that we can meet together. However, the church of Christ is spread over the whole world! That's right! And so there is a sense in which the church of Christ is **not** just local. The church of Christ is a universal assembly! And so, there is the universal church of Christ, and there are the local churches of Christ.

Friends, there are believing repentant people all over the world who have obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The Lord has kept his promise to these people and added them to His church. No human being voted on these people's admittance into the church of Christ. The Lord added them. We will never meet all these Christians on earth. In fact, think of how few Christians you will ever meet! But, in every local community of the world, Christians must look **for** one another and look **after** one another. Jesus expects this kind of **care** and commands this also through His apostles!

Jesus' apostle Paul commanded "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." ([Philippians 2:4 ESV](#)) It was to a Christian assembly that the apostle Paul commanded, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight." ([Romans 12:15-16 ESV](#))

A man by the name of Barnabas was a Christian who gathered with the church of Christ in Jerusalem. The Jewish church members in Jerusalem heard a report that there were disciples of Christ among the Gentiles in the northern Syrian city of Antioch. The elders of the Jerusalem church asked Barnabas to go and check on this report. Barnabas journeyed to Antioch and found his spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. The record says that when Barnabas "Came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus...." Tarsus was a city about 150 miles from Antioch. Barnabas went there hoping to find the man named Saul of Tarsus. "When he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they (Barnabas and Saul) met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians." ([Acts 11:23-26 ESV](#)) Barnabas once assembled with the church in Jerusalem, but now that he was in Antioch, (nearly 400 miles from Jerusalem), Barnabas assembled with the church in Antioch, where for the first time, the baptized disciples of Jesus Christ were called "Christians."

In this episode about Barnabas we have an illustration of saved people looking for and identifying other saved people. Those saved people in Jerusalem were called collectively the church at Jerusalem. Those saved people up in Antioch were called collectively the church in Antioch. They both were churches of Christ: Two gatherings of saved people; two local assemblies; but they all were in ONE body, ONE church of Jesus Christ. Wherever the Gospel is heard and obeyed people are saved. The Lord then adds them to His ONE Church.

New Christians then should search for others whom the Lord has added. Sometimes these new Christians are already acquainted with a church. If not, then the new-born Christian should look for others. When the new Christian finds

another Christian they two then can meet with Jesus who said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

An assembly such as that should be characterized by devotion, or dedication to four things. These four actions are mentioned on the birthday of the church. On the day of Pentecost, when the hearers gladly received Peter's commands about salvation, they "Were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." ([Acts 2:41-42 ESV](#))

New Christians should devote themselves to the apostles' teaching. The apostles teach us in the pages of the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in an assembly Christians should give themselves to learning what the apostles have taught about all subjects that are addressed in the New Testament.

New Christians should devote themselves to the others in the assembly. This is fellowship. Christians are to develop love for one another and a host of other attitudes and emotions that go along with fellowship.

Furthermore, new Christians should devote themselves to the Lord's Supper, which is called here "the breaking of bread." In Acts 20:7 we learn that Christian assemblies gathered on the first day of the week for the purpose to "break bread." Jesus' apostle Paul gives us details as to how we are to observe the Lord's Supper, which was created by the Lord himself. Furthermore, the assemblies of Christ's people should be characterized by prayers. Christians are urged "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." ([1Timothy 2:1-4 ESV](#))

Friends, the church of Jesus Christ is a universal church that can live in every locality! That's right! You can be a part of it! In fact, surely you want God to forgive your sins. The only thing that justifies God in forgiving your sins is the cross of Jesus Christ. This is the good news; this is the gospel of salvation. Jesus' apostle Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of

God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16 ESV) The God who created the universe has no power but the Gospel to justify His forgiveness of sin! God can forgive you if you too will believe this good news, repent of your sins, confess your faith, and be baptized into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness that God grants in Jesus Christ. Jesus will then add you to His Church, the church that Jesus builds one person at a time. Visit a church of Christ near you to find your place in the Kingdom of Christ. If there is no church near you, then consider becoming the first one in your community!