

Why Study About the Church?

1 Peter 3:15

INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Matthew 16:18** – “. . . On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”
1. Those words of promise were spoken by Christ.
 2. The church was important enough to Jesus that He:
 - a. Promised to build it Matthew 16:18
 - b. Died for it Acts 20:28
 - c. Added those who He saved to it Acts 2:47
 - d. Will deliver it up to His Heavenly Father 1 Corinthians 15:24
 3. The church was important enough that God used at least eight prophets to prophesy about it.

a. Isaiah	e. Joel
b. Jeremiah	f. Amos
c. Ezekiel	g. Micah
d. Daniel	h. Zechariah
 4. The church was important enough to the Holy Spirit that He guided New Testament evangelists to preach about it and New Testament authors to write about it.
- B. An important question: **How important is the Lord’s Church in your life?**
1. Is it important enough that you have sought to learn all that you can about it from the Bible?
 2. Is it important enough that you are thankful to be a member of it?
 3. Is it important enough that you attend its gatherings for worship?
 4. Is it important enough that you want to see its work succeed?
 5. Is it important enough that you want others to know about it?
 6. Is it important enough that you want to see it remain pure and faithful to God’s plan for it?
 7. Is it important enough that you endeavor to remain faithful to it?
- C. **1 Peter 3:15** – “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”

THERE APPEARS TO BE TWO EXTREMES REGARDING TEACHING AND PREACHING ABOUT THE CHURCH

- A. 1st Extreme: There is not enough teaching and preaching about the Church.
1. This extreme may give the impression that the church is not important.
 2. This extreme may give the impression that the church is not a necessary part of the Christian life.

3. This extreme may give the impression that the church has nothing to do with our soul's salvation.
 4. This extreme may give the impression that there is nothing distinctive about the church.
 5. This extreme may give the impression that all churches are scriptural and thus okay and acceptable to God.
 6. This extreme may give the impression that all the false teachings and misconceptions about the church are not all wrong.
- B. 2nd Extreme: The Church is taught about and preached about too much.
1. This extreme may give the impression that being a member of the church is all there is to being a Christian.
 2. This extreme may give the impression that the subject of the church is more important than the subject of Christ.
 3. This extreme may give the impression that the church does the saving rather than Christ.
 4. This extreme may give the impression that one's relationship and faithfulness to the church is more important than one's faithfulness and relationship to Christ.
 5. This extreme may give the impression that the church is the most important subject in the Bible . . . especially in the New Testament.

LET'S MAKE A COMPARISON OF NEW TESTAMENT TIMES TO OUR DAY AND AGE. The Roman world of the 1st century to our present period of time.

A. The 1st Century.

1. There was not a multiplicity of churches from among which the Lord's church had to be distinguished.
2. The early Christians knew that there was only one.
 - a. The one body was the one church. Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 4:4
 - b. There were no man-made churches to confuse those who sought to be true followers of Jesus of Nazareth.
3. The problem during the 1st century was not distinguishing the Lord's Church from among man-made denominations, but rather in distinguishing the one and only true God from among the false man-made gods. Idols and idolatry were rampant.
 - a. The Roman Empire had its diversity of gods including emperor worship.
 - b. The Greeks had their large number of idolatrous deities as noted by Paul in **Acts 17:23** – “For as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.”

- c. All Asia, including Ephesus, worshipped the idolatrous goddess Diana. **Acts 19:28** – “. . . They were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Six verses later we are told they chanted this for two hours.
 - 4. Paul preached about the **ONE GOD** because people taught and believe that there were many gods. Paul was right . . . the people were wrong.
- B. Our day and age.
- 1. Ours is not so much the problem of many gods . . . But of many churches.
 - a. Paul preached against the idea of many gods because there was but one God.
 - b. We should preach against the idea of many churches because there is But one church. **Ephesians 4:4** – “There is one body . . .”
 - 2. People believe in the concept of many churches because:
 - a. They are not knowledgeable of the Bible teaching that there is one church.
 - b. They are steeped in traditions that originated in the minds of uninspired men.
 - 3. In Paul’s day many would not accept the teaching that there is only one God . . . not many gods.
 - 4. By contrast . . . In our day great numbers will not accept the teaching that there is only one church rather than many churches.
 - 5. The truth about there being only one God was just as strange to the people of the 1st century as the truth that there is only one Church today.
- C. 1st Century – Many gods One church.
 Today – One God Many churches

WHY STUDY ABOUT THE CHURCH?

A. We study about the church because the church is an immensely important Bible subject.

- 1. Mentioned at least 212 times.
- 2. The New Testament writers used a variety of terms to refer to it.
 - a. 95 times – “the church”
 - b. 68 times – “the kingdom of God”
 - c. 32 times – “kingdom of Heaven”
 - d. 11 times – “the church of God”
 - e. 1 time – “body of Christ”
 - f. 1 time – “churches of Christ”
 - g. 1 time – “my church”
 - h. 1 time – “church of the Lord”
 - i. 1 time – “church of the firstborn”
 - j. 1 time – “church of the saints”

B. We study about the church because Christ died for the church.

1. **Acts 20:28** – “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.”
2. **Ephesians 5:25** – “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”
3. Anything important enough to Christ for Him to die for is worth knowing about . . . isn't it?

C. We study about the church because the church has a relationship to all who are saved from their sins.

1. Christ adds the saved to it. **Acts 2:47** – “. . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”
2. Those in the church were put there by Christ Himself.

D. We study about the church because the church is going to be delivered up to Heaven at the end of time. **1 Corinthians 15:24** – “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.”

E. We study about the church in order to distinguish it from man-made denominations men call churches.

F. We study about the church in order to show proper respect for the bride of Christ.

1. **Revelation 22:17** – “And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”
2. The church wants all to come and be saved.

G. We study about the church in order to teach and enlighten Christians that may not properly understand the importance of the church.

H. We study about the church in order to enlighten non-Christians who may not be knowledgeable of the Lord's church.

I. We study about the church in order to encourage people to obey the gospel of Christ, thereby enabling Christ to add them to the church that He is going to gather up to the Father.

J. We study about the church in order to instruct its members so as to enable them to be able to teach others about the bride of Christ.

- K. We study about the church in order to refute and answer misconceptions about the church.
- L. We study about the church in order to please God by declaring this portion of the whole counsel of God.
1. Paul told the Ephesians elders in **Acts 20:27** – “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”
 2. The absence of truth permits the presence of error.
 3. Truth dispels ignorance just as light dispels darkness.
- M. We study about the church because of what some are doing to the Lord’s church today.
- N. We study about the church in order that we might grow to love it more and more with each passing day.

CONCLUSION:

- A. The truth about the **ONE GOD** dispelled the ignorance about many gods.
- B. The truth about the **ONE CHURCH** can dispel the ignorance about many churches.
- C. Many want the Christ of the Church . . . But do not want the Church of the Christ. According to the Bible, that is not possible.
- D. Two passages to help launch this series of studies about our Lord’s Church.
1. **1 Peter 3:15** – “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”
 2. **Isaiah 1:18** – “Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”
- E. Bring your Bibles with you and let us study the truth about our Lord’s Church.
- F. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**