

The church of Jesus Christ - Why?

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[0 : 00] I hope you've all got access to a Bible either in book form or in some app on your phone.! Readings are going to be for the New International Version 1984.

! There are a number of people who are here today who weren't here last Sunday and it's healthy for us to have a little bit of a review of what we looked at last week.

So, introduce you to the Hubble Telescope, which was launched in 1990. It has a service, life question, question, question, they don't know. And it has two little solar panels stuck to the outside of it, which power it to do its job.

It's amazing really, isn't it? It sends an incredible amount of information back to NASA and it has transformed the way we think about the world we live in.

Amazing images have come back from Hubble, things that just were not visible before. have now been seen in the recesses of the wonderful universe which the one living God made.

[1 : 28] This one device has enabled us to see things which we never saw before, has helped us to see more widely, more deeply, more clearly, and has changed our ideas about the universe.

So that there would be absolutely no interest on anybody's part at NASA to drag out their old telescope and to use this as a substitute.

Because this has completely changed the game. The Bible is God's telescope.

It tells us exactly what we need to know about the past and the present and the future. It doesn't tell us things that we don't need to know. It corrects our wrong thoughts and it reveals to us the God who made and sustains everything.

So, unlike Hubble, it does tell us what we need to know. Hubble just gives us everything.

[2 : 33] Makes no discernment or judgment about the data it sends back to us. But God has crafted this book for our good so that we need, whatever we need to know, he has granted us to have within this book.

It is about the past. It's about the present. But it also tells us about the future. As we were singing just now and reflecting on that thought. There is a future.

And, in fact, Christianity makes no sense at all if it doesn't have future. It does not tell us things that we do not need to know.

Which is a blessing, isn't it? Our life is short. We certainly want to fill that life with things that God says matter.

And it does correct our wrong thoughts about everything that matters. It reveals to us the God who made and sustains everything. Hubble can give us marvelous pictures which show the handiwork of the creator.

[3 : 44] But they do not reveal the depth of his character in nature. The Bible is God's telescope. And so we can and should apply it to some really big topics.

For instance, the Church of Jesus Christ, which is a subject matter which is full of misconceptions and inadequate images. That don't just sort of fill the minds of the secular world around us.

But can also confuse and block our own thinking. We really want to get clear of that and to find out far more from what the Bible has to say.

Which encourages us to ask questions. Always ask us questions of Bible passages. Who, when, where and why. Last week we looked at the subject of who.

Who is the Church of Jesus Christ? And having looked at a series of verses we found this. Offered this suggested definition. The Church of Jesus Christ is that body of people of which Christ is the head.

[4 : 59] Because of his undeserved and loving, saving work for them. By his life, death, resurrection and intercession. They show that they belong to Jesus Christ.

By lives which have turned from God opposition to God obedience. Trusting Jesus as their only Savior and Lord. They are being changed by and in cooperation with God's grace day by day. Into people who are holy. A radiant bride fit for and delighted in her husband, Jesus Christ, forever. It's a very heartwarming theme.

And I would at this point just pause and say, Are you a part of this? Are you a member of this Church of Jesus Christ?

Can you identify with those words? Can you say that Jesus is your Savior? That you belong to him?

[6 : 01] That you have found amazingly by God's grace, A desire in your heart to turn from the things that are opposed to God, To the things that please him.

That in spite of many distractions, You are trusting Jesus as your only Savior and Lord. And that by the work of the Holy Spirit, You are being changed day by day.

That you are not all that you wish you were. But you know that you are not what you once were.

That God by his Spirit is doing a work in your life.

And it can only be down to him. And you want to cooperate with God's Spirit in that work. So you read your Bible, And you pray, And you do so with integrity and honesty.

And you ask for his mercy, That you might live your day in a way that pleases God. So that it can be said of you, That you are a holy person, Not only set apart for God, But something about the quality of your life, The way that you think, And the way that you speak, And the way that you interact with people, Reflects, Something of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 28] Jesus is looking forward to you, Being with him one day, As part of, A grand gathering, Which is described in the Bible, As, As the bride of Christ, Holy, Spotless, Without stain.

If you find that echo in your spirit, Well, We thank God together, Don't we?

And if this is all, Rather awkward and distant, And strange territory, I just want to say that, The invitation is made again today, By this same Lord Jesus Christ, Come to me, Come to me with all your burdens, All your needs, All your concerns, All your cares, Turn from your old life, Turn to him, You have sin that needs to be paid for, Jesus pays for it, Upon the cross, Come to him, Put your trust in him, That invitation is made today, And if you, Have known these things in the past, But they're not fresh for you today, This is a good day, To come back again, To him, Lay your life on the altar, And say, Lord Jesus,

Be my Lord, Now, Take full control of my life, Now, Now, Who is the church, Of Jesus Christ, This blessed, Blessed people, And, This morning, We want to look at the next, Three questions, When, Where, And why, And we start with the one, When, When, Because I want to address, The subject matter of, When did the church start, Now, Here's an answer, And, You might say, It has some validity behind it, Because in Ephesians chapter 1, Verse 4, Which we have been looking at, Quite a lot, Recently, We read this, For he chose us, God chose us in him, That's Christ, Before the creation of the world, To be holy and blameless in his sight,

In love, He predestined us, To be adopted as his sons, Through Jesus Christ, In accordance with his pleasure, And will, And, So, An answer to that question, Of when did the church of Jesus Christ start, Might be to say, It must have started, Before the world was made, Before the creation of the world, Because that's when God chose us, If you're a Christian, You're a chosen person, Something happened, Before the world began, Where God chose you, Well, Here's another, Answer to this question, On the day of Pentecost, Perhaps the church really started, On the day of Pentecost, Acts chapter 2, Verse 4, On this, Single day, Remarkable things happened, The Holy Spirit was, As promised, Poured out upon, The early disciples, All of them were filled, With the Holy Spirit, And began to speak,

[11 : 01] In other tongues, As the Spirit enabled them, Undoubtedly on that day, What had been prophesied, In Old Testament times, Came to pass, On that single day, And it was manifested, In remarkable experiences, And a remarkable, In gathering of people, Because on that day, As the word of the gospel, Was preached, There were, Thousands added, To the church, Three thousand in fact, Were added, To that, The number that day, So, I might say, Perhaps, This amazing day, Was the start, Of everything, Because, After all, What did the people, In the Old Testament times, Really, Know about Jesus, What did they know, About his cross, In fact, We find that many of them, Were very confused, The Jewish disciples, Were extremely confused, When Jesus himself, Began to speak about, His necessary death, And resurrection, Hebrews 11 helps us,

So please turn back to that, And we can, Look at, In particular, Verse 6, 6, Where it says, Without faith, It is impossible, To please God, Because anyone, Who comes to him, Must believe, That he

exists, And that he rewards, Those who earnestly, Seek him, Without faith, It is impossible, To please God, You can't, You can't, Please God, Without faith, And, Therefore, There is no church, Where there is no faith, That's the fundamental, Ingredient, Turn back please, To Ephesians, Chapter 1, Verse, 13, You also, Are included in Christ, When you heard the word of truth, The gospel of your salvation, Having believed, You were marked in him, With a seal, The promised, Holy Spirit, There is a fundamental, Ingredient, And requirement, And it is faith, And this helps, To address the, The first question, Of, Well perhaps the church, Started before, Creation, Because God chose a people, At that time, Yes he chose a people, But they hadn't yet come to him, It's when you look at Ephesians 1, 13, That you see, There is a special moment, That occurs, You also were included, In Christ, When you heard the word of truth, Having believed, You were marked in him, With a seal, And, I'm saying something, Which you might think, Is rather obvious, But let's be quite clear, In our minds, Those who are elected, By God, Are not yet his, Until they have put their faith, In Jesus Christ, That's why there, There is an invitation, And a command, That goes out, To all people, Trust in the Lord, To all those who are believed, To all those who are believed, To all those who are believed, To all those who are believed, To all those who are believed, To all those who are believed, To all those who are believed, To all those who are believed, I just want to indicate to you that the church of Jesus Christ is the promise of God linked with the faith of his people.

Secondly, we are of one family with the people of the faith. We are of one family with the people of the faith. So after giving this long list, the writer of chapter 11 of Hebrews says this, these were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.

[14:58] God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. There's a connectivity between the people of the Old Testament and the people of the New, between the people of the past and the people of the present.

And that is a connectivity that God has planned and has brought it to pass so that we find ourselves to be in the same family as brother Abel, who was the second son of Adam.

Verse 4, By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man when God spoke well of his offerings.

And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. He speaks because he's in that family. And so it is very unhelpful for us to think that Pentecost was somehow the starting gun and we kind of erase the Old Testament storyline.

Because actually the storyline is our storyline. In the book of Galatians, Paul says, You're children of Abraham. You're of Abraham's seed.

[16:27] He's the father of the faith. What is this faith? Hebrews 11, it's very helpful for us again. It's acting on the basis of what God has said.

Acting on the basis of what God has said. I want to just emphasize that word acting. Acting. We see that so clearly in this chapter of Hebrews.

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. I can't quite remember the chronology, but I think it took him about a hundred years to build the ark.

And he was told to build this vessel. Dry land. No one's ever attempted this before.

Why would he do it? Why would he put all your resources and energy into it? He does it because God said to him to do it and he acted upon it. So it wasn't the mere fact that God spoke to this man, which was a blessing, but he did something about it.

[17:37] He did what God told him to do. In verse 8. In verse 8. By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Very helpful, Hebrews here. Very helpful. Abraham doesn't know where he's going. You see the problem. But God said to him, go. And so he goes, and not just himself, but he takes his family and all his belongings with him on this extraordinary journey.

And he doesn't take a great deal of imagination to realize what, humanly speaking, what enormous risk he was taking, marching into the unknown. So he acts on the basis of what God has said.

Verse 11. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age and Sarah herself was barren, was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

Now here's an interesting example. Because God made that promise and it was for Abraham not to try his own ways of building a family, but to rely upon God to have a family through Sarah, which would be the promised one.

[18 : 58] But you know he actually failed, didn't he? He failed because he actually got his slave girl and had a child through the slave girl who's Ishmael. So that was not faith.

He acted, but it was not what God had said. But we know he got it right in the end. Because he realized his mistake.

And it says, And so from this one man, he is good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. God made good on his promise. But it needed Abraham to wait, to be patient, and to do what God had said.

And really every verse of this passage has the same story to tell. By faith, verse 30, the walls of Jericho fell after the people marched around them.

Well, they did more than that, didn't they? They marched around them for seven days, and the trumpets had to blow, and they did it in a certain order, and everything had to be according to the pattern, and they obeyed it and did the ridiculous thing, which was a demonstration in the end, that this must surely have been of God.

[20 : 17] The walls fell. The people, because the people had acted in obedience to what God had said. And this is the fundamental nature of faith.

And where we so often get wrong, because we make faith a construct of the mind, so we talk about people who are sort of screwing up their faith, trying to believe something which is a bit unbelievable.

But these are not people who are doing mind games. They have those problems. They have those issues. You can be quite sure of that. But the point is that in spite of their issues in their mind, in spite of their issues in their mind, they went ahead and did what God told them to do.

And as they went ahead and did what God told them to do, they experienced God on the path, on the journey. These Old Testament people and their Old Testament stories have so much to tell us, inform us, because we are in the same line.

Galatians 3, 26-29. Let's look at this rather marvelous verse.

[21 : 51] You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. There's a wonderful lumping together of every sort and type of personality and a relating which is given here saying that you are Abraham's seed and heirs of the promise.

What promise? Well, it was the promise given to Abraham that all nations of the world should be blessed through him. We are invited to trust in the God who is Lord, protector, provider, rewarder, redeemer and savior.

And you can read again Hebrews 11 through that grid and see that that's exactly what those people did in those days. They needed protection. There was the Egyptian army right on their heels as they stood on the bank of the Red Sea.

But God made a way through from them. They needed a provider as they were struggling through the desert and wondering where they would get food and water.

[23 : 25] And God looked after them and by the way their shoes as well. God says Hebrews is a rewarder of those who seek him.

And those who seek him are never disappointed. When they put his word to the test they find the blessing attached to that. They too understood their need of a redeemer and a savior.

One who would pay the price a blood that would be shed. A sprinkling of blood so the destroyer would not touch. It's good for us to see the breadth and the richness and the solidity associated with the faith of these people who are there for our encouragement.

And we stand in the same line. So in answer to that question when we can surely say we are of one family with the people of faith.

When from the beginning to the end of this earth when the final person will be joined to Jesus Christ and he will return to rule and live with his people forever. forever. So the work is not finished is it?

[25 : 00] Because until Jesus returns it remains a day of grace it's a day of invitation it's a day of opportunity it's a day when we pray that here in Brighton and Hove there will be those who put their

trust in Jesus Christ today for the first time and find themselves wonderfully amazingly added to the church of Jesus Christ.

And so it will be until the last trumpet sounds and Jesus returns and the day of grace will be over but at that point there will be a complete filling and fulfillment of the church.

all those upon whom God set his love before the creation of the world will be found on that day safe and sound belonging to Jesus Christ forever.

Let's ask the where question again Hebrews 11 helps us where is the church of Jesus Christ to be found? Hebrews 11 verses 13 and 16 all these people were still living by faith when they died they did not receive the things promised they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance and they admitted they were aliens and strangers on earth.

Verse 16 they were longing for a better country a heavenly one therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared a city for them. So you get a picture here of an earthly people with a heavenly vision.

[26 : 45] So on earth wherever there are people of faith what an extraordinary thought that is to know that there are people of faith on this earth at this time who belong to Jesus Christ in almost every known country of the world.

It wasn't always that way. I don't have a statistic and even if I did who knows because God only reads the heart but it's likely that there are more people alive today who are Christians than have ever lived at all as Christians.

Did you get that one? There are probably more people who are alive today as Christians than who have ever lived as Christians due to population growth and the mission movement.

Remember that in spite of some mission activity in the book of Acts and indeed through the succeeding centuries there were vast parts of this world that were not touched by the gospel of Jesus Christ and it did need the mission movement post-reformation and especially during the 18th century that caused people to go to previously unknown territories and have it in their hearts and minds that by the reading of the Bible they could see that there was good news to be given to the whole world and how magnificent it is to know that the gospel which stumbled badly through the sort of middle ages period in China in spite of much opposition has borne enormous fruit in that land conservative estimates of the

Christian population in China vary from about 70 to 100 million people who belong to Jesus Christ that's greater than the entire population of the United Kingdom what a thought millions of people who could tell of the glorious gospel work that has been done in Africa in India in South America as well as in North America what great numbers of people have turned to Christ how many people are able now to read the Bible in their own language which they weren't able to do before so that it is realistic to set a target 2040 possibly where every conceivable and known language of this world there will be some portion of the scriptures available in that language technology allows these things to happen the things that used to take 10 20 years of a translator's life can now be done in matters of months which is a glorious thought how the world has shrunk so that we are able to travel to places that before took weeks and weeks when letters got lost and there was no way of knowing what was going on and now we know stuff instantly so that today someone in

[30 : 10] Borneo can go on to the Calvary website if they chose to and some might even be doing that for all I know and find a message about Jesus Christ and be wrought upon by the Holy Spirit on earth wherever there are people of faith I hope you enjoy the blessing of that in your thought it's a tremendous blessing that we here enjoy in this church living in a cosmopolitan city with a great throughput of people all the time from different nations it enriches our understanding of the greatness of the gospel of Jesus and I hope when you have the opportunity to go to other places whether in this land or overseas you take deliberate opportunity to seek out God's people wherever they are so bless you brother Chris because you went over to Belarus hopefully you met with

God's people and you heard multiple sermons etc fantastic you can think about those people today can't you they're meeting as a people of God in Belarus today worshipping the Lord now you think 200 years ago very few people in this country would have even ever travelled to Belarus you just get on a plane and you can go there are God's people in Belarus isn't that a blessing you can remember your dear folks in Sicily the church that's gathering there and we're blessed because you're some of the fruit and you're coming here and you're blessing us as a result what a rich encouragement that is so Lindsay and John will be off to the States in October that land needs the gospel needs the pure gospel of Jesus Christ so I encourage you

I know you will you'll seek out God's people to have fellowship with them to encourage them as well so you can add your strength to the work there it's a blessing isn't it on earth wherever we are it enriches our faith and understanding by recognizing the people of God in this earth how lovely it was for me walk along Neville Avenue just recently bump into Pastor Gadala do you know Pastor Gadala lovely guy he's off to Egypt quite soon Egypt where they blow up churches and so forth pray for me brother he says I pray for him lovely chap little congregation he's leading 30 odd people they were out in Churchill Square this last week bringing the gospel to probably Arabic speaking peoples and the church of

Jesus Christ is in heaven where the people of faith who have left this earth now are they are the church on earth is called the church militant that's the phrase that's used because they're still at war we're still at war you know that if you're here on this earth you're at war doesn't matter how old you are you're at war you're at war with your own flesh you're at war with the devil you're at war with the world there's a battle going on the church in heaven is triumphant battle is over for them no more fighting to be done no more things to be battled against sin is gone hallelujah no temptation amazing the church triumphant that's why those who lose loved ones are completely ambivalent in this tension because they've lost the ones who are dear to them but they know they're in a place which Paul would say is far better far better and it's great when those we've lost we know had struggles physical or mental or spiritual and to know that's all gone physical struggles gone mental struggles gone spiritual struggles gone they're in the presence of the

Lord all on an equal footing all with the same sight of the saviour in heaven where the people of faith who have left this earth now are the church triumphant please notice I haven't got an intermediate category there Roman Catholicism teaches of another category which is the church penitent so Roman Catholic theology you cannot be sure that your sins are fully paid for so for the residue of sin that you may have burdening you at the end of your life you need to pay for that in a place called purgatory which is a place where purging takes place for goodness knows how many days or years but that is why in Roman Catholic teaching and Roman Catholic practice there are prayers for the dead masses said for the dead processions said for the you know held for the dead because of this thought that the dead are in a place of need the dead who die in Christ have got no needs at all please do not waste your prayers praying for those who have died in

[36 : 04] Christ pray for the living but not for those who are with Jesus thank God for them but don't pray for them they have no need of your prayer and mark this there's going to be a new heaven and a new earth when Jesus Christ returns as king of kings and the judge the old heaven and the old earth are going to be wrapped up and replaced by a new heaven and a new earth and you can see that in picture language in revelation chapter 21 and there will all the people of God be and it's a marvelous thought in the early church there was confusion on many of such matters which was very discouraging and difficult for the people of God and Paul writes very tenderly to the people in

Thessalonica about this very matter and he says when he's explained the situation to them comfort one another with these words comfort one another with these words this is what the bible our grand telescope does for us it tells us things that we could never know if it weren't revealed to us by God's mercy there are many things that we do not understand and know about the existing heaven and the new heaven and the new earth many many things but there is enough which is known given to us in his word to encourage us and to give us what we need to be able to press on to know it's a good fight it's a good journey brothers and sisters we want to be there at the end together and why why has God done this marvelous work because God is love because God is love because it's to the praise of his glorious grace that he has chosen to do things in the way he has so that people might say how gracious our

God is to show the manifold wisdom of God Steve was reminding us last Sunday night in that case to the rulers in the heavens whatever that means to show something about the wisdom of God because he makes the wisdom of this world foolish please turn to 1 Corinthians 1 20 where is the wise man where is the scholar where is the philosopher of this age has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world church looks on and thinks this is foolish we know a secret this is God's wisdom what foolish things the world embraces what foolish things the world gives its heart to and the church is like an irritant to the world because it displays God's wisdom which is completely topsy-turvy to the wisdom of this world why because he wants to have a spotless bride for his son Jesus

Christ that's what he planned before the creation of the world that's what he will have and he is determined that that should be the way it is so the invitation goes out again are you part of this are you joined to Jesus Christ are you trusting in this God to be your Lord your protector your provider your redeemer and your savior are you saying yes this is where I stand if you find all those thoughts and desires and inclinations in your heart then praise God because it's a work of his wisdom and his grace he called you to himself you're walking this pathway and one day you we will be together before him forever to the praise of his glorious grace amen