

What Is The Church Of Christ?

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Many are confused by the expression “church of Christ.” They think “church of Christ” is terminology that identifies only a small segment of Christians, namely, “the Church of Christ denomination.” This is simply not true.

The “My Church” of Matthew 16:18

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus Christ said, “I will build my church.” It is the “my church,” or church belonging to Christ (i.e., Christ's church), of this passage that we wish to consider in this study, and not some religious denomination. In order to appreciate this lesson, we ask you to set aside all religious prejudice and denominational bias, and simply consider the truths taught in God's Word on this most important subject.

One Body And One Church

In Ephesians 4:4, we learn that there is but one body. In Colossians 1:18, we learn that this “one body” is none other than the church belonging to Christ. In other words, the “my church” of Matthew 16:18 is the body, or church, of Christ (Ephesians 1:22).

In Ephesians 2:16, we learn that all mankind, whether Jew or Gentile, is reconciled *in the body* “by the cross” (cf. v. 13). Consequently, it does not surprise us to learn that the church (His body) was purchased by Jesus' blood on the cross (Acts 20:28). Therefore, those who are identified as being *in the body* are also described as being blood-bought (I Corinthians 6:20; I Peter 1:18,19). To be in Christ, then, is to be in His body, and to be in His body is to be in His church. If this is true, and the Bible clearly teaches us that it is, then a significant question would be: “How does one get into the church, or body, of Christ?”

The Lord Adds To His Church Those Who Obey Him

In Acts 2:47, we learn that “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” This is certainly as it should be, because Christ is the “author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Hebrews 5:9). In order to be saved and added to the Lord's church, one must be willing to obey Him. In I Samuel 15:22, Samuel, guided by the Holy Spirit, informed Saul that “to obey is better than sacrifice.” The apostle John, inspired by the same Spirit that inspired Samuel, wrote, “He that saith I know Him and keepeth not His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in Him” (I John 2:4).

Obedience Is Absolutely Necessary

The Lord said, “If ye **believe** not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). In Acts 17:30, the apostle Paul said, “God now commandeth all men everywhere to **repent**.” In Romans 10:10, we are taught that in order to be saved one must be willing to **confess** Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 10:32,33). While many are willing to acknowledge the importance of belief, repentance, and confession of Jesus as Lord in relationship to salvation by grace, they reject the idea that baptism has anything at all to do with salvation. This, of course, is terribly unfortunate, because the Bible unequivocally teaches that baptism, like belief, repentance, and confession, is absolutely necessary in order to be saved. If you doubt this, then we challenge you to invest a little of your time in contemplating the scriptures we are about to consider.

Baptized Into Christ

In Galatians 3:27, Paul makes it quite clear that we are “baptized into Christ.” In other words, we are “baptized into one body” (I Corinthians 12:13). Unquestionably, then, one cannot be “in Christ” (i.e., in a saving relationship with Him) unless one has been baptized. This is why baptism is said to be “for [i.e., unto, or for the purpose of] the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). This is why Saul of Tarsus was told: “And why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). This is why the

apostle Peter said, "...baptism doth now also save us" (I Peter 3:21). And this is why the Colossian letter refers to baptism as the "circumcision of Christ" (Colossians 2:11,12). Under the Law of Moses, circumcision, the cutting away of the flesh, was a sign of being in covenant relationship with God. Consequently, the circumcision of Christ, the cutting off or putting away of the sins of the flesh, is a sign of being in covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ. If you have not been baptized to "wash away your sins," then you are not in a covenant relationship with Christ.

There Is A Relationship Between Jesus' Blood And Baptism

Often, those who believe that baptism is not necessary for the remission of sins teach that an emphasis on baptism somehow denigrates the blood of Christ. Such teaching could not be further from the truth. The Bible teaches there is a relationship between the blood of Christ and baptism (I John 5:8). In Matthew 26:28, we learn that Jesus' blood was shed for the remission of sins; but in Acts 2:38, we learn that baptism is for the remission of sins. Again, in I John 1:7, we are told that our Lord's blood cleanses us from sin; but in Acts 22:16, we are told that baptism cleanses us from sin. Once more, in Colossians 1:14, we are taught that Christ's blood saves us; but in I Peter 3:21, we are instructed that baptism saves us. How can this be? How can both the blood of our Lord and baptism be for the remission of our sins?

The answer is relatively simple. Our Lord's blood was shed in His death (John 19:34), and Romans 6:3 informs us that we are baptized into His death. Therefore, it is in baptism that one first comes into contact with the precious blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Such clear Bible teaching is not hard to understand; nevertheless, multitudes have failed to comprehend it.

In John 16:13, we are told that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth. He did exactly that, and, in doing so, taught that Christ's blood was shed in His death that we might have the remission of our sins. Furthermore, He revealed that by *believing* in Christ, *repenting* of our sins, *confessing* Jesus as Lord, and *being baptized* in water by the authority of Christ, we could be saved (i.e., have our sins remitted). In other words, the "one Spirit" (viz., the Holy Spirit) has directed us to be immersed by the "one baptism" into the "one body" (i.e., the church belonging to Christ) where there is continued cleansing by the blood of Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:4,5; I Corinthians 12:13; I John 1:7-9). In I John 5:8, the Bible says, "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." My friend, if it is not in baptism that the Holy Spirit, water, and the blood of Christ *agree*, then where is it?

In Acts 2:40, it is said that, "...with many other words he [the apostle Peter] testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.'" Those who "gladly received his word [that day] were baptized" (Acts 2:41). Don't you want to be a member of the "my church" of Matthew 16:18, namely, the church or body of Christ? Then why don't you "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38)?

Perhaps there's a church of Christ in your neighborhood. If so, contact someone there and I am sure they will be happy to discuss with you the church and its relationship to Christ. If you want to contact me by email, I will be happy to study with you further also. May God richly bless you as you continue to study His word.

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