

WILL ONLY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BE SAVED?

(by George Battey)

When the “church of Christ” is mentioned to many, their first response is, “Oh yes, they believe they are the only ones who will be saved.”

Is this a true statement? Does the “church of Christ” really believe they will be the only ones saved? This is a fair question I think and it deserves a Bible answer.

DEFINING THE TERMS

Before we can answer this question we need to define some terms. Unless the terms are defined it would be impossible to give an accurate answer.

ILL: If someone asked, “Do you believe in miracles?”, there are other questions which must be asked before an answer could be given. For example:

- *What do you mean by “miracle”?*
 - *Modern miracles, or Bible miracles?*
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Likewise, before answering the question, “Will only the Church of Christ be saved?”, we must first ask:

- a) *What is meant by the word “saved”?*
- b) *What is meant by the term “church of Christ”?*

THE TERM “SAVED”

FIRST: What does “saved” mean? A lot of people use this word, but what is it we need to be saved from?

Matthew 1:21 (NKJV)

21 “And [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will *save* His people from their sins.”

We need to be saved from our sins! What if we don’t get saved from our sins?

Ezekiel 18:20 (NKJV)

20 “The soul who sins shall die. ...

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

23 For the wages of sin is death ...

The “death” referred to in this verse is not physical death. It is referring to spiritual death in hell. Unless we get rid of our sins they will cause us to be lost in hell.

Q: How does one get saved from his sins and thereby get saved from hell?

There are two points to consider:

1) **Almost all religious groups agree a person does something toward his own salvation.**

While no one can *earn* salvation, still one must do something on his own part to receive salvation.

2) **How does one receive God’s gift of salvation?**

Although we often overlook it, there is much agreement on what the Bible gives for us to follow.

Probably every preacher of every church would agree the following actions are good:

BELIEVE in Jesus as the Son of God.

Acts 16:31 (NKJV)

*31 So they said, “**Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”*

REPENTANCE – i.e. to change one’s lifestyle.

Acts 17:30 (NKJV)

*30 “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to **repent**,*

CONFESS Christ verbally.

Romans 10:10 (NKJV)

*10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth **confession** is made unto salvation.*

BAPTISM – i.e. immersion in water.

Acts 22:16 (NKJV)

*16 ‘And now why are you waiting? Arise and **be baptized**, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’*

ATTEND WORSHIP

Hebrews 10:25 (NKJV)

*25 not forsaking **the assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

STUDY BIBLE

1 Timothy 4:13 (NKJV)

13 *Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*

HAVE GOOD MORALS

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NKJV)

9 *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,*

10 *nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*

GROW SPIRITUALLY

2 Peter 3:18 (NKJV)

18 *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.*

No one could possibly argue these things are unscriptural.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

If everyone agrees these things are good, what is the difference between the “church of Christ” and other churches? The major difference is **WHEN**:

- *When is a person regarded as saved from sins?*
- *When is a person “born again”?*
- *When is one “translated into the kingdom of God’s dear son?”*

Some say salvation occurs at *the point of faith, and faith only*. They say that although all these other things are good to do, a person actually is saved when he has faith in Jesus and says a prayer.

Others say a person is *not saved until he is baptized in water*.

Who is right? Let us allow the Bible to speak on this point:

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

*17 Therefore, if **anyone** is **in Christ**, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Notice:

- *New creature*
- *Old things forgotten*
- *All things new*

Obviously such a person as this is “saved” and has his sins taken away.

Q: How does one get “into Christ”?

Romans 6:3-4 (NKJV)

*3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ** Jesus were baptized into His death?*

*4 Therefore we were **buried with Him through baptism into death**, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Notice that the “newness of life” comes after baptism.

NOTE: Baptism is a burial, not sprinkling, or pouring of water.

Romans 6:5-7 (NKJV)

5 For if we have been **united together in the likeness of His death**, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that **our old man was crucified with Him**, that **the body of sin might be done away with**, that we should **no longer be slaves of sin**.

7 For he who has died has been **freed from sin**.

According to this passage, look what happens when one is baptized into Christ:

- *Buried into His death (v4).*
- *United together in the likeness of His death (v5).*
- *The “old man” is “crucified” (v6).*
- *The “body of sin” is “done away with” (v6).*
- *The sinner is “no longer a slave of sin” (v6).*
- *The sinner becomes “freed from sin” (v7).*

The apostle Paul is teaching in Rom 6:3-7 the same thing he taught in 2 Cor 5:17. When a sinner is baptized into Christ:

- *Old things are forgotten.*
- *A man is free from sin.*
- *All things become new.*

Again, how does one get “into Christ”?

Galatians 3:27 (NKJV)

27 For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ.

Again, when were people considered disciples, or Christians in Bible times?

Acts 2:41 (NKJV)

41 Then those who gladly received his word were **baptized**; and that day about three thousand souls **were added to them**.

Only after baptism were sinners considered Christians.

MAJOR DIFFERENCE

Q: What then is the major difference between the “church of Christ” and other churches in town?

R: The major difference is the point at which a person is saved.

Belief is the starting point.

Repentance & confession moves one closer.

Baptism is the final act that puts one “into Christ.”

ARGUMENT: “If it will satisfy you, I have been baptized.”

R: Just being baptized is not good enough. Must be for the right reason. Notice carefully:

Acts 19:1-6 (NKJV)

1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples

2 he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”

3 And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.”

4 Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Here were some people who were baptized for the wrong reason and they had to be re-baptized for the right reason. Just being immersed in water was not good enough. Baptism must be for the right reason – the “remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) or “to wash away sins” (Acts 22:16).

According to scripture, baptism in water is **the point in time** when God takes the blood of Jesus and washes away the sins of the sinner (Col 2:12-13).

SAVED BEFORE BAPTISM?

This becomes very significant! Many have been taught they were saved **at the point of faith**. They were taught the following:

Believe Jesus + say a prayer = Saved ... then later get baptized.

If one was baptized thinking he was already saved, he receive a baptism never taught in scripture! The baptism of the Bible is for lost sinners – not saved believers.

BAPTIZED LIKE JESUS?

Some believe they were baptized like Jesus and for the same reason Jesus was. But notice carefully:

- *Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.* Acts 19:1-5, as previously noted, demonstrates that John's baptism is no longer valid.
- *John's baptism was replaced by another baptism.* Acts 19:1-5 also demonstrates this.

If one was baptized like Jesus was, he needs to be re-baptized (Acts 19:1-5).

THE RIGHT BAPTISM

There is only *one* right reason to be baptized and one's perception of *when* salvation occurs will affect *why* he was baptized.

Baptism is for the "*remission of sins*":

Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16 (NKJV)

16 ‘And now why are you waiting? Arise and **be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**’

The reason for baptism is to wash away sins. Any other reason is wrong reason.

Ephesians 4:5 (NKJV)

5 one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**;

1 Peter 3:20-21 (NKJV)

20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were **saved through water**.

21 There is also **an antitype which now saves us; baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

If a person was baptized thinking he was already saved, he was baptized for the wrong reason.

ILL: People do not take a bath because they are already clean. They take a bath in order to become clean.

Likewise, baptism is a bath for the soul (1 Pet 3:20-21).

This, then, is what is meant by the term “saved.”

A GROUP OF “SAVED” PEOPLE

Now, what may we call God’s saved people as a group? Suppose we find a group of 50 people who have:

- *Believed*
- *Repented*
- *Confessed*
- *Baptized*

What could we call these people as a group?

1) **We could just call them “the saved.”**

Mark 16:16 (NKJV)

*16 “He who **believes and is baptized** will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*

2) **We could also call them “the body.”**

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NKJV)

*13 For by one Spirit we were all **baptized into one body**; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*

The following terms, then, are equivalent:

“The saved” = “The body”

3) **Another name for the body is “the church.”**

So we could call this group of 50 people “the church.”

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NKJV)

*22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to **the church**,*

*23 **which is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

The following terms, then, are equivalent:

“The saved” = “The body” = “The church”

4) Another name for the church is “the kingdom.”

Matthew 16:18-19 (NKJV)

18 “... on this rock I will build **My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 “And I will give you the keys of **the kingdom of heaven** ...

Jesus was referring to the church as “the kingdom of heaven.” Why did He call the church a kingdom?

In a democracy, the majority rules; men make their own laws and change the laws according to popular opinion.

The Lord’s church, however, was not destined to be a democracy; it was to be a kingdom in which a King makes the laws and all the citizens submit. It would not be majority rule, and men would not be allowed to change the laws they did not like.

The following terms, then, are equivalent:

“The saved” = “The body” = “The church” = “The kingdom”

5) Another name for the church is “the house.”

1 Timothy 3:15 (NKJV)

15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in **the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The following terms, then, are equivalent:

“The saved” = “The body” = “The church” = “The kingdom” = “The house of God”

All these expressions refer to the same thing – God’s saved people.

THE LORD ADDS TO THE CHURCH

When one is saved, he is at the same time added to the Lord's church:

Acts 2:41 (NKJV)

*41 Then those who gladly received his word were **baptized**; and that day about three thousand souls were **added** to them.*

What were they added to?

Acts 2:47 (NKJV)

*47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord **added to the church** daily those who were being saved.*

ANALYSIS

- *How many were baptized? (3000 souls)*
- *How many were added to the church? (3000 souls)*
- *How many baptized folks got left out of the church? (0)*
- *How many unbaptized folks were added? (0)*

None of the saved got left out!

NOTE: No saved person is left out! No unsaved people are put in.

In the NT the same thing a person did to become saved was the same thing he did to become a member of the church (God's group of saved people).

They did not:

- *Do one thing to get saved,*
- *Something else to get in the church*

THE NAME

There was only one church or group of saved people in the days of the apostles. They were known simply as “*the church*.”

In only 11 of more than 100 Biblical references is the church called anything other than simply “the church.” When it was called something else, it was referred to by the name of its owner:

- “*church of God*” (Acts 20:28)
- “*churches of Christ*” (Rom 16:16)

In this last passage (Rom 16:16) the words “*of Christ*” designate ownership.

ILL: “The car *of George*” means the car that belongs to George.

Likewise, the “church *of Christ*” simply means the church that belongs to Christ.

None of these were intended to be an “official title.”

- *It is not our desire to use “church of Christ” as an “official title.”*
- *Religious division has forced us to use some designation consistently.*
- *We wish it was like apostolic days when one could just say, “the church” and everyone would know exactly what was meant.*

ANSWERING THE QUESTION

Now let us answer the original question: ***Will only the “church of Christ” be saved?***

Let the question be reworded. Since the words “of Christ” merely designate ownership, the question could be reworded like this:

Will only *the church* be saved?

We have earlier learned that “the church” is equivalent to “the house of God.” So the question could be reworded without changing its meaning to this:

Will only *the house of God* be saved?

But what is “the house of God”? We noticed previously “the house of God” is equivalent to “the kingdom.” So, the question could be reworded without changing its meaning to this:

Will only *the kingdom* be saved?

But what is “the kingdom”? We noticed previously “the kingdom” is equivalent to “the body.” So, the question could be reworded without changing its meaning to this:

Will only *the body* be saved?

But what is “the body”? We noticed previously “the body” is equivalent to “the saved.” So, the question could be reworded without changing its meaning to this:

Will only *the saved* be saved?

What do you think the answer to that question is? Will only “the saved” be saved? The answer is YES ... only “the saved” will be saved and that is all the “church of Christ” is – God’s group of saved people.

CONCLUSION

Psalms 127:1 (NKJV)

*1 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.*

This, then, is what the Bible teaches about salvation. We exhort you to:

- *Consider these things*
- *Meditate upon these things*
- *Obey the gospel*
- *Become a member of the church of Jesus Christ*

WILL ONLY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BE SAVED?

QUESTIONS:

- 1) Before we answer a question, what do we need to do?
- 2) When does a new life begin for a sinner?
- 3) According to the Bible, did anyone ever have to be re-baptized?
- 4) Why do people usually take baths?
- 5) What can saved people be called as a group?
- 6) In the NT, what was the Lord's church called – most of the time?
- 7) If the **Lord** did not build a house, what do we do if we persist in trying to build it?