
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Is the church necessary for salvation?**

For many people the answer to this question is, "NO, the church is not necessary for salvation." More and more the growing sentiment is that the church is nice, but completely unessential in order for men to be saved. Often I hear such statements as:

- *"You don't have to be in any building to be saved."*

OR

- *"You can be saved anytime, not just at church."*

Unfortunately the people that make these statements are confused as to what the church of Christ really is.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

(1) The church is not a building.

The Bible says in Acts 20:28 that Jesus died for His church, but Jesus did not die for a building. Jesus died people. So when the Bible speaks of Jesus dying for His church, it means He died for His people.

(2) The church is not an assembly.

People today talk of "going to church." Really what they mean is "going to a church assembly," or "going to a church worship service."

It is true that people can be saved anytime of any day. It is not necessary to wait until a worship service of the church to obey God and be saved by being baptized.

- In Acts 16:25-33 a man was baptized at midnight.
- In the very same chapter, Acts 16:14-15 several women were baptized and saved during the daylight hours.

So a person can indeed be saved without being in a certain building and he can be saved anytime of any day.

But the church of Christ is not a place, or a time. The church of Christ is an organization! It is a group of God's people that have obeyed the Lord in baptism for the remission of sins. The question we are asking is, "Can a person be saved without ever being a member of any organization called `a church'?"

DENOMINATIONS

In answer to this many people would say, "Of course a man can be saved without being in any organization called `a church'!" Preachers and church members all agree:

You don't have to be a member of:

- The Baptist Church
- The Methodist Church
- The Catholic Church
- The Presbyterian Church
- The Pentecostal Church

in order to be saved!

And this of course is true. All of these denominations have been created by men and they are maintained by men. None of these churches were around during the days of the apostles and none of them are necessary for salvation.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

But the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is essential for salvation. Unlike manmade denominations, the Lord's church was created and is constantly maintained by the Lord.

(1) The church of Christ is the church which Christ built.

Matthew 16:18

18 ... I will build my church ...

This is why the Bible calls the Lord's church, "The church of Christ," because Christ built it! Where does the Bible call the Lord's church the "church of Christ"?

Romans 16:16

16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

(2) The church of Christ is essential for salvation because Christ died for it!

Acts 20:28

28 ... feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Ephesians 5:25

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

Would Jesus die and shed His blood for an organization that is unnecessary for salvation? To ask the question is to answer it! The very fact that Jesus died and shed His blood for His church shows the value of the church. It shows that the church of Christ is essential for salvation and no one can be saved without being a member of this church!

(3) The church of Christ is essential because it is the "body of Christ"!

Colossians 1:18

18 [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church ...

Ephesians 1:22-23

22 ... [God] gave [Jesus] to be the head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body ...

The church of Christ is the "body of Christ" and Jesus is the head of the body. No one can be saved without being a member of His body, the church!

(4) The church of Christ is essential because salvation is in the Lord's church!

Notice carefully:

Acts 2

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

47 ... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Here the apostle of the Lord told everyone to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. That day 3000 sinners obeyed him and if you will look carefully at verse 41 the Scriptures say they were added to something. What were they added to? Verse 47 says they were added to the church.

Q: Who added these people to the church?

A: Jesus did!

Q: How many of these 3000 baptized people were added by Jesus to the church?

A: All of them!

Q: How many of these 3000 baptized people got left out of the church?

A: None of them!

Q: How many unbaptized, unsaved people got added to the church by the Lord?

A: None!

This information tells us something! It tells us that the church of Christ is not a building. The church of Christ is not a manmade denomination. Instead, the church of Christ is every man and woman in the world that has repented and been baptized for the remission of sins! The church of Christ is all of God's saved people.

Men and women can go to heaven without being a member of a manmade church, but no one can go to heaven without being in God's group of saved people ... the church of Christ.