

What is the Church of Christ?

By Roger D. Campbell

We know that some people have never heard of the church of Christ. Others, perhaps even you, have heard of us, but do not know who we are. We would like to take this opportunity to share with you some questions that are often asked about the church of Christ. We hope these ten questions and our simple answers to them will help you better understand just who we are and what we do.

1. Q: Is the church of Christ a new religious organization?

A: No. In fact, the church of Christ has existed for nearly 2000 years. The church, which is Christ's kingdom on the earth, had its beginning in the first century in the spring of A.D. 30 on the day of Pentecost, a feast of the Jews. This came about just ten days after Jesus ascended to heaven. The establishment of the church is recorded in the Bible in Acts chapter two, where we read that on that first day about 3000 received the word preached by the apostles and were baptized (Acts 2:36-41).

2. Q: Where did this church begin?

A: The Bible records that the church of the living God had its beginning in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2:5,14). Before Jesus' ascension to the Father, He told His apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from above, which was the power given to them by the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8). Though the Lord's church began in Jerusalem, Jesus instructed His followers to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person (Mark 16:15). It is God's will that there be congregations of His church throughout the whole world! In God's sight there is no such thing as a "western" or "eastern" church, as there is only one spiritual body or church of Christ (Eph. 1:22,23; 4:4).

3. Q: Who founded the church of Christ?

A: It was not founded by any man, but by the Lord Himself. The Bible says, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1). The sole founder of the church was Jesus Christ, for He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

4. Q: What books or standard of authority does the church of Christ follow?

A: The church of Christ does not follow or accept the teachings of men, including human traditions and creed books. We follow only the teaching of the Bible, because, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible is God's word, His truth, and only its message is a safe guide to make men free (John 8:32). Our creed is the Bible: it is the only authority that we accept in our faith and practice.

5. Q: To what religious organization or denomination does the church of Christ belong?

A: The church of Christ is undenominational. We are not a part of any denominational organization. We are not connected with the Roman Catholic Church, Mormon Church, denominations from the Protestant Reformation, or any other group. We belong only to God. We are simply Christians, just as the disciples were called "Christians" in the first century (Acts 11:26). We strive to follow the pattern for the church that is found in the New Testament in order that today we might be just as the non-denominational church which the Son of God founded nearly 2000 years ago.

6. Q: Where are the headquarters for the church of Christ?

A: The church of Christ has no earthly headquarters, no central office, and no worldwide governing body. We have no pope, no president, and no person or group of people on this earth who control the thousands of congregations that exist throughout the world. The Bible says that Jesus is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23), and God has put all things under His feet (Ephesians 1:22). Because Jesus, our head, now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Colossians 3:1), the "headquarters" for the church of Christ are in heaven. Each local church or congregation is self-ruling. Jesus Christ has been given all authority (Matthew 28:18), and thus every congregation is under His rule.

7. Q: Why do you call yourselves "the church of Christ?"

A: Jesus promised His apostles, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). Therefore, the church belongs to Christ. The Bible also records that Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). The church is thus His by right of ownership. We wear the name of Christ to give honor to our Savior and head, to Whom we belong. There are several descriptions of the church in the New Testament, including "church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2), "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16), "body of Christ" (Ephesians 1:22,23), "house of God" (1 Timothy 3:15), and "kingdom" of God's Son (Colossians 1:13).

8. Q: On which day does the church of Christ worship? And, what do you do during your worship services?

A: The Bible declares that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, which is Sunday (Mark 16:9). In addition, in the first century Christians assembled on the first day of the week in order to remember their risen Lord and worship the God of heaven (Acts 20:7). Today the church of Christ continues to assemble each Sunday to worship the living God. Our worship each Lord's day consists of five parts, listed below:

- (1) **Preaching/study of God's word** (Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:2) – We emphasize the Bible because only the word of God is the lamp that shows man the path he should travel (Psalm 119:105). Only the gospel is God's power to save man (Rom. 1:16).
- (2) **Prayer** (Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 2:1,2,8) – Prayer is man's way to communicate to God. Our prayers include thanksgiving, requests, praise and glory to God, and confession of sin.
- (3) **Lord's Supper** (1 Corinthians 11:23-27) – The Lord's Supper, which is also called "breaking bread" or "communion," consists of two elements: unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. In order to remember the death of Jesus, each Sunday members of the church eat the bread, which represents the body of Jesus, and drink the fruit of the vine, which represents His blood (Matthew 26:26-29).
- (4) **Contribution** (1 Corinthians 16:1,2) – Giving to God on each first day of the week (Sunday) is the responsibility of each Christian. These contributions are used to support the work of the local church, and such free will gifts are the sole source of income for the church. The church does not engage in business enterprises to support its activities.
- (5) **Singing** (Ephesians 5:19) – As the New Testament teaches, our music consists of offering praises to God in acapella singing, speaking to one another and admonishing one another "in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody" in our hearts to the Lord.

9. Q: What must one do in order to enter (become a member of) the church of Christ?

A: According to the Bible, men do not join the church, but rather God adds all saved people to His church (Acts 2:47). Or to express it another way, one must be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom (John 3:5). The condition that one must meet in order to enter the church is to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. What does this include? It includes hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), believing that God exists (Hebrews 11:6) and that Jesus is His Son (John 3:16-18), repenting of all sins (Acts 17:30), confessing Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 16:16; Acts 8:37), and being baptized (immersed in water) (Mark 16:16). When a person does the things just noted, he is saved from all past sins, and God adds him to His church. He has been born into God's family.

10. Q: Why does the church of Christ exist? What is its mission?

A: The Bible indicates that before the creation of the world, the church was already in the mind of God (Ephesians 3:6-11). Its establishment was foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament (Isaiah 2:1-4). In all of its activities, the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21). Our mission, like that of our Savior, is to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). In order to do this, the church has three different areas of work in which it engages: preaching the gospel of Christ to the lost, teaching the Bible to Christians to build them up and strengthen the church, and the doing of benevolence or good works to those in need.

Dear reader, we realize that our answers to these ten questions have been brief, but we hope that the material we have presented has helped you to better understand the church of Christ. May God bless you as you strive to learn and do His will! "The churches of Christ salute you" (Romans 16:16). Please contact us if you have questions or if we can help you learn God's will.