

ENTRANCE INTO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The kingdom of God, the family of God, the church of God, the church of Christ, the body of Christ are terms that refer to the same institution. That's right! These are all Bible words that refer to the church that Jesus said He would build. (Matthew 16:18) In fact, the reason Jesus came into the world was to "seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10) The saved make up Jesus' church! In God's way of thinking there are only two classes of people in the world. A person will eventually either be saved in God's heaven or be lost in the Devil's hell! Those people whom Jesus has saved are said to be in His Church. Those people who are lost are said to be still in their sins. Are you saved or lost? Are you among those who are in Jesus' Church?

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That a person can only be saved in Jesus' Church is quite clear in the Scriptures. For instance, Jesus' apostle Paul wrote that Jesus' relationship with the church was like a husband's relationship with his wife. Paul wrote, "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior." ([Ephesians 5:23](#)) Since Jesus is the savior of his body, the Church, then to be in His Church is to be saved. The apostle Paul later used some other words to describe that salvation. Paul wrote: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." ([Ephesians 5:25-27](#))

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her! The thing that makes salvation in the church possible is the fact that Jesus "gave himself up for her." Jesus did not give himself up to the cross for a nation. Jesus did not give himself up for a particular nationality or a particular race. Jesus gave himself up for the Church, which is composed of people from every nation and every race. However, Jesus **had** to give himself up before salvation became possible! That's right! The crucifixion comes first, but not just any crucifixion. Jesus was God's only begotten son. Only Jesus' sacrifice could justify God's free and gracious forgiveness of sin. Jesus' crucifixion was for the sins of all mankind. Just "as one trespass (Adam's) led to condemnation for all [people], so one act of righteousness (Jesus') leads to justification and life for all [people]. For as by the

one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." ([Romans 5:18-19](#))

The Son of God's obedience at the crucifixion enabled His Father to be just in **forgiving** sin. Salvation is possible only because the crucifixion came first.

Therefore, salvation is possible in the Lord's church! But entry into the Lord's church only happens when a person has been washed with water by the word. Remember what Paul wrote, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. What does that mean? The "washing of water" refers to baptism in water. The phrase "by the word" refers to Jesus' command and His promise. Jesus commanded baptism in water and promised forgiveness of sins on the basis of His sacrifice. The apostle Paul put it this way, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." ([Galatians 3:27](#)) Paul also wrote, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." ([Romans 6:3-4](#)) Paul also wrote this to Christians, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* [slave] or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#))

When a person is baptized into Christ he or she enters the church of Christ, which is the kingdom of God. At the point of our baptism a person's forgiveness is said to be justified and he or she is now sanctified. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." ([1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#)) The words "sanctified" and "justified" both describe a Christian's standing with God. "Justified" means that Christian is no longer considered guilty. His or her sins have been justly forgiven because Jesus paid the penalty for sin. The word "sanctified" means that a Christian is now dedicated to the service of God. The apostle Paul illustrated the meaning of "sanctification" when he likened it to a

holy vessel in a man's house. "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. [However], if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work." (2 Timothy 2:20-21) And so, the sanctified, holy, Christian is useful to the master of the church, the house of God. Paul went on to describe this usefulness when he told Timothy to "Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, [even] after being captured by him to do his will." (2 Timothy 2:22-26)

Friends, when a person is baptized into the family of God, he or she passes from one state to another, from one condition to another, from one relationship to another. For instance, the New Testament describes the "lost" condition as being "dead in trespasses and sins", but if a person is saved, then he has passed from death into "life." (John 5:24; Ephesians 2:1-5) Furthermore, being "lost" in sin makes a person an "enemy" of God. But when a person is saved they are known as a "friend" of God. (John 15:14) Sinners are said to be "sold under sin", slaves (Romans 7:14); but a saved person is said to be "redeemed", that is, purchased back from the slavery of sin (Ephesians 1:7). Lost people are said to be "unholy", but saved people are said to be "holy." The word "unholy" means undedicated, unfit for proper use. On the other hand, the word "holy" means dedicated, fit for the Master's use. The minds of lost people are said to "darkened." But the minds of saved people have been "enlightened." (Ephesians 4:17, 18) The lost condition is likened to an "old man" in an old life of sin. The saved condition is likened to a "new man" who lives in "newness of life." (Romans 6:5)

These are the different Biblical ways in which the lost and the saved are described. Each condition is a state of being. And a person can only live in one of those two states. However, God has arranged a process by which a person can move from the lost state to the saved state. God can forgive because Jesus died

for our sins! But how can salvation come to me? What must I do to receive or accept this great salvation?

Jesus pulled a child to himself and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

(Matthew 18:3-4) Humility is a prerequisite to salvation. The Jewish people who heard the first gospel sermon were humbled when they realized that they had crucified the Savior, the Son of God. They were cut to the heart and cried out, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37-38) As long as a person seeks to please himself he cannot please God, and he will remain outside the kingdom of God. A person's entire nature and will must become submissive to the nature and will of God. I cannot please God unless I am willing and anxious to do God's bidding and that without quibbling, or grumbling! Jesus said, "Not everyone that says to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21) What then is the will of God? Well, Peter commanded it! Peter ordered those humbled people to "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins....." Jesus told some Jewish people, "Unless you repent, you shall all...perish." (Luke 13:3, 5) And Jesus' apostle Paul told some Gentile people, "He [God] commands all people everywhere to repent...." (Acts 17:30) Friends, unless we repent we cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven, the church of the living God.

But the "washing of water" is also necessary. No wonder then that Peter told those people to "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." (Acts 2:38) No wonder then that the preacher Ananias told Saul of Tarsus to "Arise, and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16) It's no wonder then that Peter also wrote that "baptism does also now save us." (1 Peter 3:21) Why would Peter say that? Because obedience to Jesus is just as important as believing in Jesus! In fact, to believe Jesus and take Him at His word is to Obey Him, and obedience is the result of our true faith in Jesus' commands. You cannot separate humility, faith, and obedience.

All of those people who obeyed Peter's commands to repent and be baptized were added to the church of Christ. Jesus himself added them. Acts 2:47 says, "And the Lord added to the church daily, those who were being saved." No human can add you to the kingdom of God. Only Jesus Christ can add you to His church, and He will do that when you believe Him, and humbly repent of your sins and are baptized into Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:26, 27)

Are you ready to enter the Lord's church?