

The Bible versus the “Church of Christ”

by James L Melton

[SOURCE](#): This article is a slightly condensed version of a small booklet that I wrote a few years ago. It’s purpose is to expose the false teachings of the so-called “Church of Christ.” If you attend a Church of Christ, or you know someone who does, I challenge you to read this study carefully, checking all of the scripture references in your Bible and praying for the Lord to show you the truth (Jn. 16:13). Remember, Jesus said SEEK and you shall FIND (Mt. 7:7).

A message from William Stewart:

It was recently brought to my attention that the article which was formerly at av1611.org/jmelton/chchurch.html is no longer on the site. I searched and found a copy of the article on another site. Rather than provide another link that may itself become defunct at some point, I thought it best to make a PDF copy of Mr. Melton’s article available here. This will give readers full disclosure of what Mr. Melton wrote and provide context for my response to his arguments.

What is the Church?

The Church of Christ people fail to realize that the “true church” is a *spiritual organism*, NOT a physical organization. In the tract, *Introducing the Church of Christ*, by Delton Haun (Haun Tract Co., Pasadena, TX.), we read on page 8 that, “*The Lord promised only one kind and built only one kind—There is only one body (Eph. 4:4), and that one body is the church. (Col. 1:18)*”

Here Haun isn’t referring to the SPIRITUAL body of Christ. He is referring to his own religious group, which he CALLS the body of Christ. He is referring to his particular group of people who believe and practice the same things, NOT a spiritual body of born-again believers.

This can be very confusing for an unsaved reader who knows not what it means to be born-again spiritually into the spiritual body of Christ (Jn. 3:3; I Cor. 12:13). The only “church” that the natural man can understand is a PHYSICAL church that he can see with his eyes. A natural man who has never been saved cannot understand how it is possible for people to be “born” into the spiritual body of Christ. Unfortunately, the Church of Christ people don’t understand it either.

On pages 9 and 10 of this same tract, Haun says that, “*The church of Christ today is no more or no less than the New Testament church reproduced in doctrine and practice in this twentieth century.*”

This is a common belief in the Church of Christ. Another tract titled, *Are You Looking for a Church?* (Exum Press, Crystal Lake, IL.), says on pages 11 and 12 that the Church of Christ people are actually going back and becoming members of the “*original church that Christ built.*” These people believe that the true Church ceased to exist for about seventeen centuries, and that THEIR church has restored the true faith for today. This would mean that such great Christian men as

John Wesley, Martin Luther, John Knox, and George Whitfield were not really members of the “true church” because the “true church” didn’t exist in their lifetime.

There is absolutely NO SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT for this doctrine. In Matthew 16:18, the Lord Jesus Christ plainly said, “. . . I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The true church has existed since the day Jesus started it. All throughout church history, millions upon millions have entered into the spiritual body of believers by receiving Christ as their Lord and Saviour (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 10:13). If you have received Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then you are a member of the true church, no matter WHAT denomination you are associated with, and if you haven’t received Him, then you are NOT a member of the true church, regardless of how many religious groups you join. Salvation is not in a church; **it’s in a PERSON—the Lord Jesus Christ.**

The Church Name

The Church of Christ claims to reserve for itself the ONLY scriptural name for a New Testament church, although the term “church of Christ” is found nowhere in the Bible.

On page 4 of George Baily’s pamphlet, *Why I Am A Member of the Church of Christ* (Lambert Book House, Shreveport, LA), we read these words: “*Since the church belongs to Christ shouldn’t the church be so called? It is certainly scriptural to refer to the Lord’s body as the ‘church of Christ’.*” This is the result of human reasoning, not Bible study. There is nothing particularly wrong with the term “Church of Christ,” but it is wrong to insist that this is the ONLY scriptural name for the church when the term isn’t even found in the Bible! *A Bookmark of Basic Bible References*, by John Hurt (Hurt Publications, Smyrna, TN), gives several scripture references to “prove” that the term “church of Christ” is the only scriptural name for the church. The references listed on this bookmark are Romans 16:16, Acts 4:12, Matthew 16:18, Philippians 2:9-10, Isaiah 62:2, and Colossians 3:17. The term “church of Christ” is found NOWHERE in any of these references, because the Lord never specified a special name for the church. The disciples were first called “Christians” at Antioch (Acts 11:26), but a specific name is never given to the church itself.

Music in the Worship Service

According to the Church of Christ, it is unscriptural to use musical instruments in worship services. Only vocal singing is allowed. On page 4 of *Surprising things about the church of Christ*, by Dub McClish (Valid Publications, Denton, TX), we are told the following: “*The apostle Paul wrote the following instruction on this subject: ‘Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord’ (Eph. 5:19). In a parallel passage he wrote: ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one*

another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God' (Col. 3:16). Please notice that this is activity in which all of the assembled worshippers are to be involved. Just as no one can do our praying, studying, or giving for us, no one can do our singing for us."

To what "assembled worshippers" do you suppose Mr. McClish is referring? In Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, the apostle Paul is instructing Christians in matters pertaining to their PERSONAL FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST, not worship services. The Church of Christ is very quick to quote these two verses OUT of their proper context, ignoring the two chapters in which they are found. Neither chapter speaks of "assembled worshippers," and neither chapter forbids musical instruments.

The Church of Christ position is that we are FORBIDDEN to use instruments in worship because the New Testament does not specifically AUTHORIZE us to use them. L.R. Wilson's tract, *The New Testament Church – It's Music in Worship* (Haun Publishing Co.) says the following: "In our efforts to follow the Lord Jesus Christ we are not governed by what He did not forbid, but by what He has authorized."

This is unscriptural logic. There are MANY things that are used in worship services that are not specifically authorized by the Lord Himself. For example, HYMNALS, MICROPHONES, and PITCH PIPES are not authorized in the Bible, but the Church of Christ still uses them in their worship services. There are many things that the Bible doesn't specifically authorize, but this doesn't mean they are forbidden! God gave us all a BRAIN to use when making decisions about such matters, and He has sealed real Christians with His Holy Spirit to lead and guide them in their decision making. One who insists on looking for specific authorization in all things is one who insists on IGNORING the leadership of the Holy Spirit of God, for the scriptures do not specifically mention all things.

The Bible is very clear in stating that the Lord loves good music of praise and worship, and this DOES include musical instruments. Please check the following references in your Bible and see for yourself. In fact, you will even see that three of these references have musical instruments IN HEAVEN! The references are: Psa. 33:2-4, I Chron. 25:5-6, II Sam. 6:5, I Chron. 16:42, Neh. 12:27, Rev. 5:8, 14:2, 15:2, and Psa. 150.

The Lord's Supper

Like the Roman Catholics, the Church of Christ places far too much emphasis on the Lord's Supper. In the pamphlet, *What is Expected of Me as a Member of the Church of Christ?* (Standard Publishing Co., Cincinnati, OH.), Fred Gardner tells us on page 20 that, "Fidelity to this service

almost invariably results in a continuance of a fervent spirit for the Lord and his work. It helps maintain us in our 'first love' (Rev. 2:4), and to keep us doing the 'first works' (Rev. 2:5). When week by week we visualize the broken body and the shed blood of the Master for our sins and the sins of those about us, we do not fall away from a fervent love for Him and an earnest working for the Salvation of those about us—the 'first love' and the 'first works'."

Now we agree fully that a Christian needs to labor to keep the "first love" and to do the "first works" for the Lord, but this has NOTHING to do with the Lord's Supper! Revelation 2:4-5 say nothing—ABSOLUTELY NOTHING—about the Lord's Supper.

Notice Mr. Gardner's comments about having to "visualize the broken body and the shed blood of the Master" in order to stay in fellowship with Him. Where in the Bible are we told that our fellowship with Christ is based on our visualizing his body and blood? The Bible tells us to walk by FAITH, not by SIGHT (II Cor. 5:7)! Friend, you can observe the Lord's Supper fifty-two weeks a year, but if you haven't been born again then you're lost and going to Hell, and if your sins aren't being confessed to the Lord regularly, then you are OUT of fellowship with Him, in spite of your faithfulness to the Lord's Supper (Jn. 3:1-7; I Jn. 1:1-10).

Mr. Gardner also tries to lead his readers to believe that Christians are to observe the Lord's Supper EVERY WEEK. Does the Bible teach this? No, it does not. If you'll read Matthew 26:26-28 and I Corinthians 11:23-26, you will be reading what the Bible has to say about the Lord's Supper, and you will see nothing at all about observing it on a "week by week" basis. I Corinthians 11:26 says, *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."* It is doubtful that God expects us to interpret the words *"as often as"* to mean "week by week".

So how did the Church of Christ come up with their "week by week" observance? Simply by perverting the scriptures! For example, let's take a look at page 9 of *"Why I Am A Member of the Church of Christ,"* by George Baily. Mr. Baily says that, *"The Bible tells us that upon the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread (Acts 20:7). Since the Lord said that the Lord's Supper was observed upon the first day of the week, we gather that this was a weekly affair."*

Mr. Baily just told you that THE LORD said that the Lord's Supper was observed on the first day of the week. Read it again. Now tell me, WHERE exactly did the Lord say that? I'd be delighted to have any Church of Christ member show me WHERE and WHEN the Lord said that. You say, "He said that in Acts 20:7." He DID? I thought He said that they came together to BREAK BREAD, not to

observe the Lord's Supper. Mr. Baily wants you to think the two are the same, but they are NOT the same.

Also he didn't tell you that the original Lord's Supper was observed at NIGHTTIME (Mt. 26:31), and that it was NOT observed on the first day of the week (Sunday). He also forgot to tell you that the practice of BREAKING BREAD was done on a DAILY basis from house to house, not on a weekly basis in the Church of Christ. You find this information in Acts 2:46, and you'll also find that MEAT was involved, not just bread and wine. Why? Because it wasn't the Lord's Supper.

There is no specific day in which Christians are told to observe the Lord's Supper, and nowhere in the Bible are we told to observe it on a weekly basis. The Lord loves His church and He gives us liberty (II Cor. 3:17) to make certain decisions for ourselves. This is evident in the fact that Paul wrote "*as often as*" in I Corinthians 11:26.

Resurrections and Judgments

The Church of Christ believes in a GENERAL resurrection and judgment for all people, both saved and lost at the same time. This perversion of truth is known as A-Millennialism (No Millennium). The first seven verses of Revelation chapter twenty speak of a coming one thousand year reign of Christ and His saints on this earth. This reign immediately follows the Second Coming of Christ, which occurs in Revelation 19:11-21.

A-Millennialism cannot be correct, because Revelation 20:1-7 clearly tells us that there WILL BE a one thousand year reign. To say that there will be no Millennium is to simply DENY the word of God.

True Bible-believers take the Pre-Millennial view, which is the correct view, according to the word of God. Notice the order of events in Revelation: The Church Age ends at 3:22, and the church is not mentioned again until 22:16. John's going up to Heaven in 4:1-2 pictures the calling out of the Christians, immediately following the Church Age of chapters two and three (The church's departure from the earth is also mentioned in I Thess. 4:13-18 and I Cor. 15:51-52). Revelation chapters 6 through 18 cover the Tribulation period that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 24:21. This is when the Antichrist will rise to power and deceive those who were not caught up to meet the Lord because they were not true believers (I Thess. 4:16-18, Lk. 17:35-36, II Thess. 2:11). Then the first ten verses of Revelation 19 cover the events in Heaven immediately preceding the Lord's Second Coming, which follows in verses 11 through 21. After that, we see the one thousand year reign of Christ and His saints showing up in 20:1-7. This is the promised Kingdom of the Old Testament (Isa. 2:1-4; Dan. 7:27). Satan is doomed in Revelation 20:10. The wicked are judged at

the White Throne Judgment in verses 11-15 and cast into the lake of fire. Eternity begins with chapters 21 and 22. Now this is the order in which the Lord reveals these events to us. If He'd intended for us to adapt some other interpretation then He'd surely have told us. The Bible is perfectly clear in stating that the 1000 year reign of Christ will come immediately AFTER the Second Coming. Anyone can see that.

Now read this incredible remark by a Church of Christ author: *"The Bible certainly does not teach that there will be a 1000 year period AFTER the second coming of Christ."* This comes from page 1 of *The Rapture, Tribulation, and Pre-Millennialism*, by Grover Stevens (Stevens Publications, Lubbock, TX.). He arrives at this false conclusion by perverting II Peter 3:9-10 and saying that *"the day of the Lord"* means *"the day of his coming,"* meaning ONE SPECIFIC DAY in which the Lord returns and burns up the world, leaving no time frame for a 1000 year reign on the earth. Did you notice that Mr. Stevens doesn't say anything at all about II Peter 3:8? He IGNORES verse 8 and quotes verses 9 and 10 *OUT OF CONTEXT*. Why did he skip verse 8? Because verse 8 INCLUDES the 1000 year reign!! Verse 8 tells us that one day is as a THOUSAND YEARS in God's eyes, so the *"day of the Lord"* can very well INCLUDE the 1000 year reign! The Church of Christ ASSUMES that the *"day of the Lord"* is only a 24 hour day, but the Bible never says this a single time. Therefore, the *"day of the Lord"* can begin with the Second Coming and end a thousand years later with the White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:11-15.

How do we know this is so? That's easy. Revelation 20:5 (which is NEVER quoted by the Church of Christ) speaks of a *"first resurrection"* for the Christians BEFORE the 1000 year reign. Lost people are not brought up to the White Throne Judgment until AFTER the 1000 year reign in Revelation 20:11-15, and this is called the *"second death."* So there is a *"first resurrection"* for the saved BEFORE the Millennium, and there is a *"second death"* for the lost AFTER the Millennium.

The saints are resurrected BEFORE the Millennium so they can reign with Christ DURING the Millennium, but the Church of Christ OMITTS the Millennium altogether, making the First Resurrection and the Second Death one and the same. By doing this they create a *"general judgment"* for everyone, which is entirely unscriptural.

Water Baptism and Salvation

Of the many heresies taught by the Church of Christ, Baptismal Regeneration is probably the most well known, and also the most harmful. This is the ancient pagan belief that a person must be baptized in water in order to receive cleansing from sin and the right to enter Heaven.

Let's begin with page 2 of Delton Haun's tract, *Must One Be Baptized to Go to Heaven?* Haun says the following: "As we begin this brief study let us note the question concerns us, not Abraham, nor the thief on the cross. These men lived and died in past ages before Christ's death and before the terms of pardon were announced publicly on the day of Pentecost for all who lived in the Christian age."

Notice how quickly Haun attempts to avoid the issue of the thief on the cross. This is because the thief on the cross was saved WITHOUT BEING BAPTIZED (Lk. 23:42-43). Was this really a "past age" before Christ's death or before the terms of pardon were announced publicly? No, it wasn't. The thief died AFTER Jesus died (Jn. 19:31-33), for no one ever died in His presence. The thief died in THIS PRESENT AGE, not in a past age, and the "terms of pardon" were made very clear a long time before Acts 2. The Gospel of John points out over and over again that one is saved by BELIEVING on Christ (Jn. 1:12, 3:16, 3:36, 5:24), not by water baptism. In fact, AFTER Jesus had come up from the dead and returned to Heaven, John tells us that we can have life through Christ's name by BELIEVING on Him, not by getting baptized in water (Jn. 20:31).

Haun tells us on page three of his tract that "be baptized" means to be "immersed in water." This is where ALL Church of Christ people err so greatly. Church of Christ members are taught that there is only ONE kind of baptism: WATER baptism. The Bible teaches otherwise, for the Bible says that there are SOME baptisms which are NOT water baptisms. The Church of Christ wants you to think that all baptisms in the Bible are WATER baptisms, for this will cause you to think that Galatians 3:27 and Romans 6:3-4 are referring to water baptisms when they are NOT.

There is one baptism which is far more important than water baptism, and this baptism is the SPIRIT baptism that the new Christian receives when he receives Christ as Saviour. I Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body . . ." The Spirit of God baptizes, or immerses, the new believer into the spiritual body of Christ. This has nothing to do with water baptism, for there is no water anywhere in I Corinthians 12:13. So, to be baptized is NOT the same as being immersed in water. Immersion in water is only ONE KIND of baptism.

To insist that all baptisms are water baptisms is to openly deny the word of God. John the Baptist clearly spoke of THREE different baptisms in ONE VERSE. He said in Matthew 3:11, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:"

Now, you've just seen THREE separate baptisms in one verse. Read it again, just to be sure. There are three baptisms in one verse, so it is unscriptural to assume that all baptisms are WATER

baptisms. It is unscriptural to say that “be baptized” means to be “immersed in water,” because to be baptized means to be immersed in ANYTHING. An immersion in fire is a baptism in fire; an immersion in water is a baptism in water, and an immersion in the Holy Ghost is a baptism in the Holy Ghost. When we read the words “baptize” and “baptism” we should NOT immediately assume that we are reading about a WATER baptism. Likewise, when we see the word “water,” we should not immediately assume that we are reading about baptism, because we probably aren’t (For example, the water in John 3:5 has nothing to do with water baptism.).

Now, let’s look at a few “proof texts” used by the Church of Christ to “prove” that water baptism is essential for Salvation.

A famous one is found in Mark 16:16, where the Lord Jesus Christ says, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

According to the Church of Christ, one will be damned if he is not baptized. Haun says on page 5 of his tract that *“Jesus is pointing out what it takes to be saved. He describes the kind of man who is pardoned. That man is one who believes and is baptized. Jesus did not say that the man who believes shall be saved or that the man who is baptized shall be saved. He said both belief (faith) and baptism are essential. It is like saying two plus two equals four. Faith plus baptism equals salvation.”*

The Church of Christ specializes in confusing people by taking verses out of context and IGNORING the rest of the Bible. Did you read verse seventeen, which speaks of the apostolic signs of casting out devils and speaking with new tongues? Does the Church of Christ practice these signs? No, they don’t. Do they practice verse eighteen by drinking deadly things, taking up serpents, and laying hands on the sick? No, they don’t. Then why would they steal verse sixteen from its context and then leave the next two verses alone?

The truth of the matter is that Mark 16:16 does NOT teach Baptismal Regeneration IN or OUT of it’s proper context, and it certainly does not teach that *“faith plus baptism equals salvation”*! The verse plainly says, *“. . . he that believeth not shall be damned.”* One is damned for NOT BELIEVING. No one is damned for not being baptized. It is the sin of UNBELIEF that damns the lost soul to Hell, and this is very well confirmed by many portions of scripture, which Haun chooses to ignore in his tract:

*“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that **believe** on his name.”* John 1:12.

“That whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that **believeth** on him is not condemned, but he that **believeth** not is condemned already, because he hath not **believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:15-18.

“He that **believeth** on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that **believeth** not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John 3:36.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and **believeth** on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” John 5:24.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **believeth** on me hath everlasting life.” John 6:47.

“. . . . Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, **Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Acts 16:30-31.

“But to him that worketh not, but **believeth** on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Romans 4:5.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe** in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Romans 10:9.

“Wherefore also it is contained in the scriptures, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that **believeth** on him shall not be confounded.” I Peter 2:6.

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that **believeth** in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and **believeth** in me shall never die. **Believest** thou this?” John 11:25-26.

Now, who in their right mind would choose to IGNORE these plain and simple Salvation verses by charging to Mark 16:16 and trying to confuse matters? Any confusion that may have arisen in Mark 16:16 was cleared up in the above verses. Whatever the Church of Christ THINKS that Mark 16:16 means is immaterial. According to the scripture that you’ve just read, a sinner is saved by BELIEVING on Jesus Christ, and a sinner is damned by NOT believing on Jesus Christ. That’s perfectly clear to any honest reader.

In Mark 16:16 the water baptism FOLLOWS the individual’s belief as a good testimony, just as taking a seat follows stepping onto a school bus. The key element in one’s Salvation is his BELIEF ON CHRIST ALONE. Water baptism is important, and it should always FOLLOW Salvation as a picture of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ, but it cannot save anyone.

The Church of Christ also uses Acts 2:38 for their beliefs about baptism: *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*

About this verse, Delton Haun’s tract says the following on page 7: *“Peter said it is necessary for men in this age to be baptized to obtain pardon. The preposition ‘of’ means ‘in order to’ and is so rendered in some translations. (Living Oracles, Anderson, Macnight, Goodspeed) The English Revised and American Revised say ‘unto.’”*

Notice how the Church of Christ must refer to OTHER TRANSLATIONS in order to find support for their false teachings! This is a standard practice among the cults: ESTABLISH MORE THAN ONE AUTHORITY SO THAT YOU CAN CHOOSE THE ONE YOU PREFER AT ANY GIVEN TIME.

We will stick with the Book that God uses, the King James Bible, and we’ll show you WHY Acts 2:38 does not teach that a person has to be baptized in water in order to be saved.

First of all, the same Peter who is preaching in Acts 2:38 later learns a few things about Salvation that he did NOT know in Acts 2. We know this is true, because in Acts 15:11 Peter says something very different: *“ . . . through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved. . .”* In Acts 15:11 Peter says nothing about baptism. Why not? If it’s so important, why didn’t he mention it? Very simple. At the time of Acts 2:38, Peter didn’t fully understand Salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). God had to reveal this to Peter, and, by the time we reach Acts 15:11, Peter gives us God’s Salvation plan for today. Why is it that we never hear the Church of Christ quoting Acts 15:11? If God didn’t stop with Acts 2:38, then why did the Church of Christ?

Secondly, please notice that there are NO GENTILES (non Jews, like you and I) in Acts 2:38. Every individual present is a commandment keeping, Sabbath observing, temple worshipping Jew. Being gathered at Jerusalem on Pentecost, a Jewish feast day, these Jews heard Peter’s stirring message about Christ, the One they had crucified. They came to realize that they had crucified their Messiah. They had already been told how to be saved in verse twenty-one (which the Church of Christ never mentions), and they were *“pricked in their heart”* in verse thirty-seven. So they asked, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* Notice that they did NOT ask, *“What must I do to be saved?”* (The answer to THAT question is found in Acts 16:31, not Acts 2:38.) These Jews wanted to know what to do in light of the fact that they had crucified their Messiah. This is a NATIONAL situation concerning Israel, not an individual situation dealing with lost sinners. No one in the chapter asks how to be saved.

The third thing to notice about Acts 2:38 is that the term “for” does not always mean *“in order to,”* like the Church of Christ teaches. A good example of this is found in Luke 15:14 where the

Lord Jesus tells the cleansed leper to go and offer a sacrifice *“for thy cleansing.”* The man wasn’t offering a sacrifice IN ORDER TO be cleansed, because he had already been cleansed in verse 13. He was offering a sacrifice BECAUSE OF the cleansing that he already had. Therefore, the word “for” sometimes means “because of”. For example, if you go to jail *for* stealing, is it IN ORDER for you to steal, or is it BECAUSE OF the stealing that you’ve already done? Also notice how “remission of sins” FOLLOWS belief in Acts 10:43, and PRECEDES water baptism.

Number four, the Jews were told to be baptized *“in the name of Jesus Christ,”* but WE were told to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in Matthew 28:19. Acts 2:38 is obviously a special baptism for the first century Jews who had rejected Christ. They were told to be baptized in His name to show that they now RECEIVED Him.

Also, please take note of the fact that the Jews of Acts chapter two received the Holy Ghost AFTER they were baptized. However, the believing Gentiles of Acts 10:44 received the Holy Ghost BEFORE they were baptized, and Peter was preaching there too, just as he was in Acts 2:38. Why didn’t Peter tell the Gentiles in Acts 10:44 the same thing that he told the Jews in Acts 2:38? Answer: GOD DIDN’T GIVE HIM A CHANCE! God went ahead and sent the Holy Spirit before anything was said about baptism, because He didn’t want anyone confusing baptism with Salvation.

Now, this reveals to us a great truth about the Book of Acts: *It is a Book of PROGRESSIVE REVELATION.* God reveals more and more about salvation by grace through faith as the Book progresses. This should be expected when one considers the fact that this is the first century when God’s dealings with man change from law to grace. Peter learns a valuable lesson about grace in Acts 10:14-15, and by Acts 15:11 he is well established in the doctrine of Salvation by Grace.

Another verse used by the Church of Christ to teach Baptismal Regeneration is Acts 22:16. This is where Ananias tells Paul to *“. . . arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* Revelation 1:5 plainly tells us that it is the BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST that washes away sin, not water baptism, so there is obviously more to Acts 22:16 than the Church of Christ teaches.

Why did Ananias say this to Paul? Well, WHO WAS Ananias? According to Acts 22:12, he was a Jewish proselyte who still followed the Old Testament law. He still followed the law because he, like Peter, did not yet have full understanding of Salvation by Grace. Obviously he didn’t, or he wouldn’t have been following the law. Being a “devout man according to the law”, Ananias associated water baptism with the Old Testament laws of PURIFICATION (Jn. 11:55; 2:6; Num.

19:7-22; Acts 21:24-25), which were for washing the FLESH, not the soul. He didn't have a clear understanding of the Blood Atonement of Christ, which washes away all sin.

The Church of Christ also uses I Peter 3:21 to teach that water baptism saves people, but, as anyone can clearly see, the verse says that it is a "*figure*," not a doctrine. Water baptism PICTURES the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. When a believer is baptized he is being identified with Jesus Christ, but it is his BELIEF that brings Salvation, as we've already seen.

Romans 6:3-4 and Galatians 3:27 are frequently used by the Church of Christ to teach that water baptism is essential for Salvation, but there is no WATER baptism in either of these verses. These portions of scripture are speaking of the SPIRITUAL baptism of I Corinthians 12:13 which places the new believer into the body of Christ. Water baptism does NOT place anyone into the body of Christ. The Holy Ghost places us into Christ the moment we RECEIVE Christ as our Saviour, and this has nothing to do with water baptism. Remember, to "baptize" means to immerse. To be baptized into Christ is to be IMMERSED into Christ, not into the water (I Cor. 12:13).

Paul said in I Corinthians 1:17 that, "*Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. . .*" The "*gospel*" is defined in I Corinthians 15:1-4 as being the good news that Christ died, was buried, and then rose again on the third day, and the subject of water baptism isn't mentioned once. Baptism is important, and all true believers should submit to water baptism (Acts 10:47; 8:37-38; Mt. 28:18-20), but trusting water baptism for Salvation is a terrible and unscriptural mistake.

Friend, you have seen how the Bible interprets itself. You have seen the TRUTH about the doctrines of the Church of Christ. According to Romans 16:17-18, these people should be MARKED and AVOIDED. We urge you to start looking for a true Bible believing church where the word of God is preached and taught correctly. If you've never been saved, we urge you to carefully and prayerfully read the Salvation verses that we've already presented. You can be saved this very moment, but you must repent of your sins (Lk. 13:3) and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. ONLY JESUS CHRIST can save you. Your church membership, your baptism, and your good intentions cannot save you. We urge you to repent of your sins and call upon the Lord to save you today, for tomorrow may be too late.

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