

What was the writer's intent, to be symbolic or literal? The life-or-death statements in the Bible ("if you do not believe that I am (He), you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:24)) we take at face value and teach them accordingly. God's Word is intended to be understood by man. Most can be understood without tremendous difficulty when we do not bring our own desires to the table. Understanding is not the most difficult part - accepting what it says and acting upon it may prove more difficult. Often, when people say "literally", they mean, "why do you take the Bible so *seriously*". --It's God's Word. That should be enough reason.

## **#2 "Why is there Communion every Sunday?"**

Jesus said that when we celebrate this feast, He eats it with us (Mark 14:25)! Each time we have the Lord's Supper, we participate symbolically in the blood and body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). In this obedience, we also show our unity as a body, remember his sacrifice, and proclaim Christ's death and resurrection (1 Cor. 11:17-34). This time is one of the most important reasons we meet on Sunday. Paul and his companions thought it so important that they waited seven days in one town so they could assemble with the church and "break bread" together (Acts 20:6-7).

## **#1 "Do you believe no one else goes to heaven?"**

Membership in a particular "church" with a particular name can't save anyone; Christ's church already includes those who are saved. One can be a member of the best church on earth and still miss heaven. So what saves us and gets us to heaven? Jesus does. The gospel (good news) is that Jesus died for our sins as a sacrifice, was buried and was raised from the dead on the third day (1 Cor. 15:1-4). It's God's action through Christ that saves us, not a local church. When you stand before Christ in the judgment, He won't ask to see your membership card, but He will ask, "Do I know you?" (Matthew 7:21-23). And the only way to know Jesus is through his gospel – believing that He is God's Son; that He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament; that He died and rose again on our behalf to erase our sins; and that He is now the undisputed Lord of all. Once a person accepts that gospel, places his or her faith in Jesus to save him from hell and put him in heaven, repents of his past, and is baptized, he moves into the Christian life - the life of the saved (Acts 2:22-41). So the only ones who are going to heaven are those who've been reborn spiritually. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3). Worshipping with other believers is a result (Hebrews 10:24-26).

**Please, let us know if you desire additional study.**  
**[www.taylorschurch.com](http://www.taylorschurch.com)**

# **9 questions about the church of Christ**

(many of these questions deserve further study)

## **#9 Where did the church of Christ come from?**

It came from God (Acts 2:47). The question, though, often is asked from a different perspective - society tends to group everything into factions. The "Church of Christ" in America appeared as a restoration and revival movement in the first few years of the 19th century. Gospel meetings led by men with backgrounds such as Scottish Presbytery, Methodist, and Baptist, railed against false teaching and preached a return to God's Word. As the revival swept across America, names such as the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ and the Church of Christ were used for the "new" groups. Some, who desired control to be left in the hands of larger, organized groups, tried to identify these scriptural descriptions as denominations. Some even called those who withdrew "Campbellites" after a couple of the early leaders in the revival movement - ironic since Christians should insist on wearing only the name of Christ and not the partisan names of human beings (1 Cor 3:4). The movement, as a whole, emphasized several basics, such as (1) ending the denominational lack of unity and being "Christians only," (2) looking to God's Word, instead of un-inspired writing, for instruction on worship and living, and (3) restoring the spirit and simple practices of Christianity depicted in the Word. Authority in the church belongs to Christ (Eph 1:20-22), and He has provided all instruction needed (2 Tim 3:15-17).

## **#8 "Where are your musical instruments?"**

Rather than a foundational issue, the "lack" of musical instruments is a by-product of our desire to obey Scripture. We likely also do other things differently than what some are used to doing, but this difference is, perhaps, most immediately observable. We don't use instruments for the simple reason that God didn't say that instruments should be used, and He didn't give any new covenant examples of instruments being used. Many verses in the New Testament pertain to Christian worship here on earth with singing (Matt 26:30; Acts 16:25; Rom 15:9; 1 Cor 14:15; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Heb 2:12; James 5:13). None speak of use of musical instruments. We strive, in all things, to use scripture as our authority. Praise is from our lips (Hebrews 13:15) and from our heart (Col 3:16). God communicated to us all we need to know (2 Tim 3:16), so we know He told us what He desires from worship. Old Testament worship included instruments played by Levite priests. And, in heaven, new instruction may be given (Mark 12:24-25). But the early church included two groups of people: Jews with a

background of instrumental music (Psa 150) and pagan Gentiles who also worshipped with musical instruments. Yet, early Christians all worshipped without instruments. Instruments weren't used until the fifth century and organ music until the eighth century. Many worldwide still sing without instruments, or "a cappella" (Italian literally meaning "in the style of the chapel" or "in the manner of the church"). So, if a Christian wants to engage in New Testament Christian worship, using only voices best fits the Biblical model and avoids a lack of unity often found today. We strive to use God's pattern in music and in everything we do.

#### **#7 "Why don't you obey the Old Testament?"**

If by "obey", one means *believe* or *study*, we definitely believe that God inspired the entire Old Testament, and we study it diligently because it's God's Word. Even the New Testament says, "For everything written in the past was written to teach us..." (Romans 15:4). Without the Old Testament revelation, no one could fully understand the New Testament. But the Old Testament isn't our *covenant* with God. As Christians, we're under the new covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13). That's why Christians don't offer animal sacrifices in worship, stone adulterers to death, abstain from pork, burn incense, or keep other regulations demanded by the old covenant. The new covenant was brought to us through Christ's blood sacrifice (Luke 22:20) - it's our agreement with God through Christ. Since God is the author of both the old covenant and the new covenant, many concepts from the Old are repeated in the New - both teach about God. But, the old covenant was about being an Israelite. The new covenant is about being a Christian.

#### **#6 "How does one join the church of Christ"**

By simply becoming a Christian - just as in the New Testament. When one accepts and obeys the gospel, Christ adds him or her to His church (Acts 2:47) - the worldwide, past and present church (I Thess 5:10). Then, that believer associates with a local group of disciples to continue his or her growth and service to Jesus (Acts 9:26-29; 10:26).

#### **#5 "What denomination are you?"**

What is a "denomination"? It's not really a Biblical word, but, instead, it's a word that people use in order to categorize religious organizations. The phrase "churches of Christ" comes straight from the Bible (Rom 16:16), so we, and many others, use that term for a congregation of disciples. There are congregations, and perhaps, even denominations that wear that title which may or may not agree with our views on the Bible. Scripture uses many terms to describe God's people. Typically, a "denomination" has a national organization, an earthly headquarters, a hierarchy of management

or office, a handbook or creedal statement of belief (in addition to or instead of the Bible), and various committees and groups that operate above and outside the local congregation, while making policy for the local churches to follow. Conversely, the Bible demonstrates a very limited hierarchy of structure in a church - all within the local congregation. There are qualified men (Titus 1:5-9; I Tim 3:1-11) who are described as elders, shepherds, overseers, bishops, etc. (1 Pet 5:1-2); and deacons (which are essentially helpers (I Tim 3:12-13)). And, there are people who do things such as teach and preach. All Christians have responsibilities to Christ and one another. While there are examples of local congregations from various areas cooperating together in the New Testament and today, each congregation is self-governing answering to Christ alone as the head of the church. Since we study and teach the Bible, things said and done are (and should be) similar to what other Christians teach and preach. But, Christ is the only head of the church, and all of the other decision makers for our congregation gather together with us each week.

#### **#4 "Why do you emphasize baptism so much?"**

Because the Bible does. The New Testament mentions baptism 51 times. Every conversion to Christ recorded in the book of Acts ended in a water baptism. And every New Testament writer considered baptism an essential part of a believer's response to Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote that the gospel, which saves us, is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ on our behalf - to atone for our sins (1 Cor. 15:1-4). He also wrote that water baptism is a faith based re-enactment of that gospel. It's a symbolic death, reflected by burial in water (instead of dirt) and a symbolic resurrection acted out by rising from the water (Romans 6:1-7). Christ considered it so important that not only was He baptized but He included this teaching in His orders as He sent His apostles out to make more disciples (Mark 16:15-16). Our new life is by grace, but the Bible clearly teaches how one goes about being raised into that new life (Rom 6). The Bible contains no "Sinner's Prayer", but, instead, speaks of repentance, baptism, and obedience to Christ springing from a belief in what the Word teaches.

#### **#3 "Why do you take the Bible so literally?"**

In any form of communication, some statements are literal and some aren't. "STOP" on a street sign is to be taken literally. But "Mustang" on a car is symbolic - the car isn't literally a horse. In our approach to Biblical interpretation, we try to separate the literal and symbolic by using a few common sense rules: What did the Biblical statement mean to those who originally heard it? What was the context? What does it mean for us today?