

1 **Q:** What is the Gospel?

A: The apostle Paul wrote a letter to the church in the city of Corinth. In First Corinthians chapter 15, verses one through four, Paul gives the best summary. **1 Cor 15:1-4**, emphasis added: *Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of **first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.***

Gospel is a word that means *Good News*. The Good News is the message that Christ died for our sins, He was buried in the grave, but He overcame death and was resurrected back to life on the third day.

Normally, we do not think of death as a good event in our lives. Certainly, it is not considered Good News. So, we will look more closely. Christ dying for my sins means he accepted the punishment that I deserve. This was even more than a physical death. While Jesus was on the cross, he said, *“My God, why have you forsaken me?”* God, who is omnipresent, was not with Jesus. Hell is the separation of God from man; this means Jesus experienced hell. Jesus did this for mankind or everyone who lived before and after the cross of his death.

Again, we look to scripture to gain further understanding. After the resurrection, Jesus spent additional time with the apostles, teaching them more fully. (Remember that until the resurrection, the apostles were expecting an earthly kingdom.) Moments before he ascended into the sky, he said in **Matthew 28:18-20**, *“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

The resurrection was proof that Jesus was the Christ or Messiah, which means "anointed one." This was the ancient way of showing a person had been chosen for a purpose. When kings of Israel were

selected, they were anointed by God's prophet. Jesus overcame death, thereby proving he was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. On this basis, he has "all authority."

Jesus Christ then gives the apostles their mission or purpose in life.

Go - don't sit around and wait for people to come to you.

Preach - tell the good news, gospel or path of salvation that God has provided, making followers.

Baptize - those who believe the good news are expected to respond. **James 2:19**: *You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.* To simply say "I believe" just makes man even with the devil.

Teach - There is more to serving Jesus than the basics of becoming a Christian. Paul used the phrase, "hold firmly to the word."

Let us see if the apostles did what Jesus ordered. When Jesus left the apostles, they stayed together and prayed. On the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after the death of Jesus, God filled the apostles with his spirit and gave them the words to say in their preaching. In the New Testament book of Acts chapter two, these events are reported. It was a powerful sermon, and many people were convicted that Jesus was the Christ. **Acts 2:37**: *They were cut to the heart.*

Picture in your mind a group of people who understood themselves as the people of God, learning they had a role in murdering the very one God sent to save them. How could we expect forgiveness or to escape the punishment we deserved? They cried out, "*Brothers, what shall we do?*"

These people were not left hanging for an answer. They were not told to pray and see if anything happens. They were not told that your faith is enough nor were they told it was hopeless. Notice the scripture. **Acts 2:38**: *Peter replied, "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."*

Throughout the remainder of the book of Acts, every person who turns to Jesus is baptized. Even the one many consider the greatest

apostle, Paul, says in his own description of what he was told to be saved. This was after he had been praying and fasting for three days. **Acts 22:16:** *And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.*

Back to your question, **what is the gospel?** It is that the Son of God accepted the punishment deserved by man and provided a way that you and I could have forgiveness. The process includes:

My believing that Jesus is the Messiah sent to save,

My repenting, or turning from sin to the way of the authoritative Jesus,

My immersion or baptism in water by the authority of Jesus to have my sin removed,

My continued service in the name and cause of Jesus. **Acts**

2:47 reveals that all who were obedient in Acts chapter two on the day of Pentecost were added to the number of the saved.

The King James Version translated this "added to the church."

When a person obeys the Gospel as preached by the apostles, they are added to the church or body of Jesus as a part of God's salvation process.

Some say God has done all that is necessary for man to be saved and you should not do anything, or you will be trying to earn your salvation. Indeed, salvation is a GIFT! It is a gift so priceless, which all of mankind together cannot even begin to earn, deserve, or pay the price for even one person to be saved. But even a gift must be accepted on the terms in which it is given. God's terms.

If a rich person deposits a great sum of money into the bank in your name, you must withdraw the money for it to benefit you!

If a diamond ring is offered to a woman as an engagement ring of impending marriage, she must say yes.

Since the beginning in the Garden of Eden, God has expected his creation to obey him. This obedience is never considered as an earning or deserving of the blessings of God but is often a condition of being blessed.

2 **Q:** Do you believe in the Old Testament?

A: We believe the Old Testament to be true. The apostle Paul wrote the following words to the Christians in Corinth. **1 Cor 10:11:** *These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.* There are many lessons to be learned from God's dealing with ancient Israel and others. The confusion revealed by your question is probably because we believe the New Testament is the sole authority for those who follow Jesus.

The Old Testament is called a *schoolmaster, tutor or leader* by Paul in **Gal 3:24-25:** *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.* The purpose of the Old Testament, and more specifically the law through Moses, was to bring Israel to the place and time for the coming of the Son of God in human form. He is Logos or Word in the flesh. **John 1:1:** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Therefore, we follow Jesus and the New Testament.

Heb 10:1: *The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-- not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.* Given to Israel through Moses, the law was a forerunner or shadow of the coming of the Christ and his kingdom.

Col 2:14 says: *Having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.* Jesus lived a perfect life under the law; therefore, he embodied the law. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, the law was literally and spiritually nailed to the cross. **Eph 2:15:** *By abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.*

One purpose of the Mosaic law was to keep the Israelites separate

from other people, thus providing evidence that the Creator had kept his word to bring a Savior through the seed (descendants) of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus fulfilled the law as he promised in **Matt 5:17-18**: *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.* If Jesus had abolished the law without completing the prophecies, Israel would have been without guidelines and without a relationship with God.

When Jesus completed his work, then his will became law for all mankind, not just for Israel. **Heb 9:15-17**: *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.*

In summary, the Old Testament contains many examples and lessons by which we learn, but it is not binding on mankind today. **The New Testament is our sole authority and guide.**

3 **Q:** Why do you use the name “church of Christ?”

A: We have no copyright or any other exclusion on a name. We simply seek to do every religious act in a Bible way, with a Bible name. We wish everyone would do the same. The New Testament does not give an official name for the organization of Jesus. However, there are several terms used to designate and describe it. These include: *the church*, **Acts 9:31**; *church of God*, **1 Cor 1:2**; *body of Christ*, **Col 1:18**; *Kingdom*, **Col 1:13**; *churches of Christ*, **Rom 16:16**; *bride of Christ*, **Rev 21:9**. Any of these descriptive terms would be acceptable, most have chosen to use *church of Christ* because it is Biblical, honors Jesus Christ, and offers consistency when visiting other communities.

4 **Q:** Why don't you have an organ or a piano or a band?

A: Since we are under the New Testament (see answer #2), we go to it for our religious practice. The presumption throughout the Bible is that followers of God will worship him. However, it is not left up to the believer to worship totally as he chooses. The Old Testament gave specific instructions to Israel. Christians will look to the New Testament and find the commandment to SING in **Eph 5:19:** *Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.* Also in **Col 3:16:** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.* The command to sing is specific in that it excludes by its nature.

The Old Testament gives lessons which may be applied to this specific and exclusive nature. Cain and Abel were each commanded by God to offer a sacrifice. While we are not told the exact instructions, we are told in **Heb 11:4:** *By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.* We learn in **Rom 10:17:** *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.* Faith is described as hearing and following the instruction of God. Abel offered a better sacrifice by faith. Cain sacrificed and worshiped but not according to the instruction of God. The Bible tells us that God was displeased with Cain.

Another example is found in **Lev 10:1:** *Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command.* These men were nephews of Moses, but as they worshiped in the temple on behalf of the people of Israel, they used *unauthorized* fire. The result of their disobedience was death from the fire roaring out and devouring them.

Additionally, there are scriptures which warn against adding to the word of God, which are found in the New Testament and in the Old Testament. **Rev 22:18-19:** *I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes*

words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. Deut 12:32: See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it. The conclusion can only be that God takes his commands seriously and wants man to obey.

God's command is to sing. We are content to obey his command.

5 **Q:** Why do you have the Lord's Supper every Sunday?

A: The Lord's Supper, or communion, was instituted by Jesus Christ as recorded in **Matt 26:26-29** and **Luke 22:19-20**. The apostle Paul taught in **1 Cor 11:23-26**: *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

We know that Jesus was resurrected from the grave on the first day of the week: **Matt 28:1**; **Mark 16:2**. The church of Jesus began on Pentecost, which is on the first day of the week. The first century church met on the first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper, as seen in **Acts 20:7**: *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.* Later Paul gives instruction regarding giving and connects it to the first day of the week in **1 Cor 16:1-2**. Today's churches meet every first day of the week and generally collect an offering every first day of the week. It follows that the Lord's Supper commemorating the death, burial and resurrection would be observed every first day of the week.

6 **Q:** Where is your headquarters?

A: Christ is our head. **Eph 1:22-23**: *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Consequently, there is no earthly headquarters. Headquarters is*

where Jesus resides.

Each local congregation seeks to have elders. **Acts 20:28:** *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.* These men are not the head, but shepherds--spiritually mature men chosen by the flock to oversee the spiritual lives of the Christian family. Their selection is based on the guidelines found in **1 Tim 3:2-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**.

Each congregation is autonomous (self-governed), without hierarchy and without anyone or any group creating rules in addition to the teaching of the New Testament.

7 **Q:** What do you mean by nondenominational?

A: The definition of denomination means to designate or set aside from the whole. Since it is our intention to be just what the New Testament teaches regarding the church found in scripture, we want to be no more nor any less than that church. Therefore, we chose not to be a denomination or just a part of what the New Testament teaches. It is our intent to be as much like the church God wants us to be as is humanly possible. To this end, we have no creed but Jesus Christ, we have no head other than Jesus, and we have no rule of faith or authority other than his book, the New Testament.

Please note there is no claim of perfection in this effort to do what Jesus commands. It is our goal to be what he wants us to be, but we are human and have human failings.

8 **Q:** What is meant by "Orthodox?"

A: Orthodox means right or correct. All religious groups would claim to be right. Who would respect any person who knowingly did wrong and also encouraged others to do wrong? Orthodox or orthodoxy is frequently used to refer to established or traditional beliefs and practice. In some situations, it is part of a name, i.e. Eastern Orthodox. Some use the word to indicate those who are more traditional than themselves. Tradition does not necessarily mean

right, nor does it mean it is wrong. Right or wrong is not determined by the age of a practice but by the New Testament of Jesus.

9 **Q:** Do you have a priest or a pastor?

A: Yes, we have both, but possibly not as you may understand the terms. Again, we use the New Testament to find our answer. The New Testament teaches that Jesus is the High Priest (**Hebrews 4:14; 7:24**) and every Christian is a priest under Jesus (**1 Peter 2:5, 9**). This means there is no one who stands between the disciple and God but Jesus (**1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 12:24**). Believers are not dependent on any other human to worship or serve God. Confession is not made to a man, nor is communion controlled by others; prayer is directly to the divine in the name or authority of Jesus (**John 16:24**).

Pastor is from the Latin language and means shepherd. Churches of Christ seek out men in each congregation that have the qualifications given in the New Testament. The apostle Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus, which contain these qualities (**1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9**). The New Testament uses several terms to describe these men:

shepherds or pastors,
overseers or bishops (from old English), and
presbyter (from Latin & Greek) or elder means older and is contrasted with novice or less experienced in the faith.

The passages which speak of elders in the church are plural and suggest a group rather than one man. Shepherds, bishops, or elders are not understood as rulers who set up their will as an authority, but as examples, guides, and encouragers that have been chosen by the local members to lead the congregation.

10 **Q:** Why don't you call your preacher pastor or reverend?

A: Most local congregations have a man who serves the church as preacher. He may be referred to as preacher, minister, or evangelist. Minister means servant and every disciple is a servant of Jesus. Evangelist means proclaimer of good news. Preacher carries the same thought. In any case, there are no titles used by the men who serve in this capacity.

Pastor would mean the church leaders who meet the qualifications given by Paul and who have been selected by the local church to serve as shepherds or elders. The preacher may meet those qualifications or may not. If he does, some preachers have been chosen by the local congregation to also be a pastor. He serves with others as a part of the group. However, they do not use “pastor” as a title.

Pastor, Reverend, Father and even Brother are avoided as religious titles. **1 Peter 2:5, 9** teaches an equality among Christians, not a hierarchy. In **Matthew 23:8-10**, Jesus says, *“But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ.”* Rank or superiority or titles among the followers of Jesus are out of place. Jesus had to deal with this among his own apostles. In **Matt 20:21-28**, He condemned it then, and it should be avoided. **Mark 9:33-35**.

11 **Q:** Do you teach that one must be a member of the church of Christ to be saved?

A: This is an interesting question and one that is frequently misunderstood and emotionally charged. The truth is, we probably believe the same thing about this.

The New Testament teaches there are only two kingdoms. Man is either in God’s kingdom or not. The following verses use these words interchangeably: church, kingdom, and body. They mean the same thing:

Colossians 1:13-14: *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Matt 16:18-19: *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

Col 1:18: *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the*

beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

When a person is saved, God makes him a part of the kingdom, body, or church. **Acts 2:47:** *Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.* Jesus said in **John 14:6**, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* Our intention is to follow Jesus and Jesus only, believing to do so will mean Jesus will put the saved in His kingdom, church, or body. So yes, we believe a person must be in Christ's kingdom to be saved but not in a denomination.

12 **Q:** How does a person become a member of the kingdom of Christ?

A: This is a very important question and should be answered from the teaching found in the New Testament and not from man. There are many scriptures which deal with man and salvation. Some seemingly give different answers, but that is because the person is at a different place in their path to citizenship. Using scripture, we will learn what God expects from man.

First, man must listen to the word of God. **Romans 10:17** says, *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.* This answers the question of *how do I begin?* The message of Jesus is found in the New Testament; it is a must that one learn the message and accept it. A summary of that message is found in **1 Cor 15:1-4:** *Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* Hearing is of no effect unless one believes.

Faith or belief is obvious to any reader of **Heb 11:6:** *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.* Likewise, **John 3:16**, *"For God so loved the world that he*

*gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” And **John 1:12**: Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Those who believe Jesus is the one chosen by God to be the Savior of the world will ask like those on the day of Pentecost, “*Brothers, what shall we do?*” **Acts 2:37**. Please note these were believers who were *cut* or *pricked* to the heart with the realization of their sin. Peter and the apostles told these believers to *repent*. Why did Peter not say believe? Because they did believe, they were convinced, but they still needed to do more.*

Confession of Jesus as the son of God and our savior from sin should be a lifetime enterprise and not once before a friendly group.

Matthew 10:32: *Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.* **Acts 8:37** is considered a scribe’s recognition of the practice of the early church. “*Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.*”

Immersion or baptism is taught in the New Testament as a part of the new birth or being born again. Jesus said in **John 3:5**, “*I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.*” Paul wrote in **Rom 6:3-4**, “*Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*”

When he gave his Great Commission to the apostles, Jesus said in **Matt 28:19**, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” When the apostles preached the first gospel sermon in **Acts 2:38**, they commanded these believing people to *repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.*

When the apostle Paul recounted how he became a disciple of Jesus Christ, he was told by Ananias in **Acts 22:16**, *“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”*

Peter compares the flood of Noah’s day with baptism and clearly states in **1 Pet 3:21**, *“and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* Baptism saves because it is a part of God’s plan, not because man’s effort is counted as earning the right to be saved.

When a person obeys God, it is not an earning but a faith that obeys. Can anyone imagine a scene where Abel refuses to offer sacrifice because God can save him without it? Or Noah refusing to build an ark, because God does not need an ark to save him? Or Abram refusing to leave Ur because God can bless him there as well as anywhere else? Or Joshua refusing to lead the Israelites about Jericho because God can make the walls fall without Israel having to march?

In summary, God desires that all men
hear the gospel,
believe the gospel,
repent, or turn from their life of rebellion,
confess Jesus as Lord,
be born again through immersion into Jesus.

This is the beginning of a new life in Christ, where we may serve our Lord through the way we live, still flawed, but forgiven of our sin, in a covenant relationship with God and heaven bound. Alleluia!

If you have any questions, please email it to
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