

CHRISTIANITY

Among the world's more than six billion people are innumerable religious beliefs. Most profess faith in a "god", calling him by different names and trying to serve him in many different ways.

Someone has said that there must be a gene in humans that causes us to believe that there is a god, because humans throughout the world and throughout time have held some sort of belief.

It is not a physical gene that attaches humans so strongly to God but, rather, it is the fact that within the human body lives an immortal soul. That soul identifies with its life-source — with God — and is endlessly reaching out to Him.

Who is that eternal Spirit, that God for whom all of us seek? How can we know Him and please Him? We want to answer some of these questions that haunt humanity.

"AMONG WORLD RELIGIONS, WHAT IS TRUTH?"

QUESTION: How can we know **who is the true God?**

ANSWER: Since God is Spirit and we cannot see Him, we must learn about Him through **His written revelation** of Himself and the **effects of religion** in the lives of people.

QUESTION: How can we know **which book is from God?**

ANSWER: To answer that question, several things must be considered:

1. **Does the book teach or allow the worship of images as God?** Common

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sense tells us that lifeless images made by humans cannot be our Creator. The Bible says “*Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’* ...[A man] *plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it. Then it shall be for a man to burn, For he will take some of it and warm himself; Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; Indeed he makes a god and worships it; He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it.*

“He burns half of it in the fire; With this half he eats meat; He roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, ‘Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire.’ And the rest of it he makes into a god, His carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, Prays to it and says, ‘Deliver me, for you are my god!’” (Isaiah 44:6,14-17).

2. Does the book allow the worship of humans as gods? Humans are created beings, blessed with immortal souls, but we are not God and it is wrong to elevate any human to the level of God and to worship him. The Bible forbids the worship of any man or any image (Revelation 19:10; Exodus 20:1-5).

3. Many religions of the past have died because their message and beliefs were not relevant to changing times. If a book must be revised to correct errors or to fit current needs, it cannot be from God. The Bible says, “*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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

4. Even though it is a book dealing with spiritual matters, is it correct in areas that touch on history, science, and prophetic revelation? If a book, claiming to be a revelation from God, contains errors in these points that can be tested, how can it be a reliable guide in spiritual and eternal questions? If a book is mythical in nature, how can we trust it to teach the truth about God? The Bible contains countless historical details. **It has been used as a guide for archeological searches and has been proven to be accurate in every challenge men have made.**

Scientifically and medically, the Bible has revealed many things that no human knew at the time the message was written. Hebrews 11:3 states a scientific fact, “*the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*” In the first century, when these words were written, there were

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no microscopes enabling people to examine atoms and sub-atomic particles — not visible to the naked eye — which make up everything we “see”. But the Creator God knew, and He told the writer of Hebrews what to write, even though that man did not understand the meaning. Today, with advancement in science, we do understand, and we can see that the Bible is scientifically accurate.

When the book of Psalms was written, no human knew about the scientific fact that there are “paths” in the sea, yet the writer said by inspiration, *“You have put all things under his [man’s] feet, ... The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea that pass through **the paths of the seas**”* (Psalm 8:8). When the book of Job was written, no human knew about the scientific fact that the earth was resting on nothing visible. By inspiration, Job wrote of a scientific truth that even he did not understand: *“He stretches out the north over empty space; **He hangs the earth on nothing.**”* (Job 26:7)..

Hundreds of **prophetic statements** are made in the Bible that have proved to be absolutely accurate. Centuries before their actual completed fulfillment, **Daniel wrote by God’s direction that there would be four world empires** (Daniel 2), and that **the kingdom of God would be begun in the days of the fourth empire.** The fulfillment of this prophecy is in the empires of the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, borne out in detail by historical records. **Jesus was born in the days of the Roman Empire,** and it was immediately after His death, burial, and resurrection that the kingdom of God on earth — the church — was established. True to the prophecy, within that first century, the church had spread throughout the world (Colossians 1:6).

The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were described in more than 300 prophecies, made hundreds of years before His birth. These prophecies were fulfilled in exact detail, a fact that could be possible only because He is who He claimed to be: **the Son of God, born in the body of a human in order to provide the way for sin to be forgiven and for man to be reconciled to God.**

5. If a book’s teachings are followed exactly, will society be made better or worse? Without fail, every religion contains some truth in its teaching, but religions created by men also teach much error. This error is destructive when it is followed in life. Some religions teach witchcraft, the power of voodoo practices, and evil spells cast by witchdoctors.

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Others teach human sacrifice to idols, the worship of rivers, the earth, the sun and the moon. Some teach that women are inferior and that no one can be saved in the body of a woman.

Did you know that, through the centuries, there were many “barbaric” practices in pagan religions: infanticide, exposure (especially of) female babies, child abandonment, abortion, human sacrifices. Women often had no legal rights. If a husband wanted to divorce, or even kill his wife, in many cultures it was not a crime. Girls were married while no more than children. Women were burned on their husband’s funeral pyre, or if the widow was allowed to live, she was often severely abused and starved. Slaves had no more rights and protection, legally, than an animal.

Humanists and atheists today are trying to rid the world of Christianity, with its code of morals and ethics that define “right” and “wrong”. **They do not realize that the “human rights” and “civilization” they take for granted are the direct result of Christianity’s tremendous effect on all cultures and religions throughout the world.** Everywhere, today, “civilized” societies are measured by the norms that have developed through the tempering influence of the New Testament.

TAKE THE CHALLENGE

Read the New Testament. Compare the teachings of Christ with the teachings of others who are counted as “holy men”. Compare Christianity with other religions. Compare its effect on human lives with the effect of other religions. We believe that you will discover that **everything that is right and good for humans is taught in the New Testament of the Bible, and that everything that is harmful is forbidden.** Two thousand years of history have proved that, if you become a Christian and follow those teachings exactly, it will bring nothing but good into your life. This evidence is our best guarantee that it is also our safe and reliable guide for eternity.

**“BUT THERE ARE MANY ‘KINDS’ OF ‘CHRISTIANS’.
HOW DO I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT?”**

Those who were not reared in a “Christian” environment are rightly puzzled by the divisions among believers in Christ. They ask, “If there is only one God, why are there so many churches?” It’s a good question.

In Acts 20:30, Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus, *“Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things,*

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*to draw away the disciples after themselves.” In this single statement, Paul explained the problem that would plague the church of Christ as it grew and spread over the centuries and over the world. From among the elders (bishops) some would rise up to teach things contrary to the Scriptures, and they would divide the church. Further details are given in 1 Timothy 4:1-3: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will **depart from the faith**, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, **forbidding to marry**, and commanding to **abstain from foods** which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”*

These words were prophetic, and history bears out the truth of what was foretold. Elders (bishops) of the early church began to teach many things contrary to Scripture. “Denominations” developed.

QUESTION: What is a denomination?

ANSWER: A denomination is a division which separates the original whole into parts. Because of differences in teachings, the original church which Jesus established became divided into separate groups. A “denomination” called the “**Gnostics**” developed even during the lifetime of the Apostles. They taught, among many other errors, that salvation could be gained only by special knowledge, held by a particular few, and apart from the writings of the Scriptures. **Docetists**, along with Gnostics and **Marcionites**, taught that all matter is evil; therefore, Jesus only *seemed* to have a physical body.

Other variant teachings caused other denominations to develop in the second and third centuries: **Manichaeism** was similar to Gnosticism but also incorporated elements of **Buddhism** and **Zorasterism**. Augustine became a convert to this denomination. Founders of **Montanism** in 156 AD believed that the Holy Spirit had been poured out on them anew and that they were inspired to write and teach things that should supplant the accepted Scriptures. (See **Early Christian Doctrines**, J.N.D. Kelly.) Many other divisions are recorded in religious history, showing us that denominations are not a modern phenomenon. In the early centuries of the church, these groups developed because men left the Scriptures, teaching contradictory doctrines and drawing people after them, out of the true church which Jesus had established and for which He had died. The same practice is the explanation for denominations today.

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QUESTION: When these groups developed, what happened to the original church? Did it die?

ANSWER: No. Jesus said He would build His church and **it would never be destroyed**. In Matthew 16:18, He said that even the gates of Hades (or death, itself) would not be able to prevail against His church. But many individual Christians and congregations *did* fall into error. In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus directed the apostle John to write letters to congregations in various cities and to warn them that if they followed false doctrines and teachers, He would remove “their candlestick”; that is, **they would cease to be a part of His world-wide church**. That was true then, and **it is true today**. But the Lord’s church, as a body, will exist in this world until Christ returns to take His people home to Heaven. In the meantime, let us be warned that **any individual or congregation can fall away from God by leaving the truth of the Scriptures**.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders that **men from among themselves would lead the church into error**. History shows that this is exactly how it happened. With the passing of time, elders over individual congregations began to recognize “chief elders” among themselves, then bishops over areas, and one bishop over area-bishops, until by 606 AD the “head” bishop became the Pope of Rome, over what was called the Roman Catholic Church. By 1277, Pope Innocent III was claiming himself to be the “Vicar of Christ” (the representative or spokesman) on earth, and Nicolas III called himself the “Vicar of God” (from **Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. 4, page 403). In 1830, Pope Pius IX declared Popes to be **infallible**.

From early centuries, leaders in the Catholic church had **forbidden the marriage of bishops and priests**, just as Paul had foretold. The **eating of meats** on certain days was also forbidden. Other divisive and heretical doctrines were **the mediation of Mary** for humans as the “Mother of God”; Mary’s **immaculate conception**; the tainting of all souls with the sin of Adam and, therefore, the necessity of **baptism even for infants; purgatory; transubstantiation**; and the **authority of the Pope** and the church “**traditions**” **above and beyond the Scriptures**.

When the Scriptures cease to be the authority in religious matters, the floodgates for error have been opened.

In 1054, quarrels over the introduction of musical instruments in

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worship and the sprinkling (instead of immersion) of infants (not authorized in Scripture) and converts led to a major division in the Catholic church, with the new group being called the Greek Orthodox Church. Though in error on many points, the “Orthodox” church to this day practices immersion for baptism, as was commanded in the New Testament, and only a capella music is used, as was also practiced in the early church.

The sale of indulgencies — in effect, **buying forgiveness for a sin before it was committed** — led Martin Luther to defy the Pope in 1517 with what came to be called Luther’s 95 Theses, which he nailed to the door of the Whittenburg church. His rebellion eventually resulted in a total break with the Catholic church. Contrary to Luther’s own wishes, the new denomination called itself after **Luther** instead of Christ. Many Catholic practices were brought over into the church, but Luther had been so opposed to the Catholic doctrines concerning “works” that he made a complete turn-around and taught that salvation is solely by faith. He even opposed the book of James being included in the canon of Scripture, because James wrote in 2:17, *“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”*

Other divisive opinions and beliefs led John Calvin to break away and begin the **Presbyterian** church in 1535. John Smyth started the **Baptist** church in 1607. John Wesley gave birth to the **Methodist** church in 1729. In the United States, the **Mormon** church had its beginning in 1830. William Miller and Ellen White began the **Seventh Day Adventist** church in 1831. **Jehovah’s Witnesses** were started by Charles Russell in 1874. **Pentecostal Holiness** were organized in 1898. **Assembly of God** churches started in 1914, etc., etc.

Actually, thousands of individual denominational groups are in existence today, teaching doctrines differing from each other and differing from the Scripture, for **it is the differences that are the dividing walls**. Obviously, if all were teaching the same thing, all would be united!

“THE STATEMENTS ARE OFTEN MADE THAT ‘ONE CHURCH IS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER’ AND ‘YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE A MEMBER OF A CHURCH TO BE SAVED.’ ARE THESE STATEMENTS RIGHT?”

ANSWER: They are right if you can find them in the New Testament. The sad fact is that nothing even akin to those ideas is there.

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QUESTION: Then why would preachers say such things?

ANSWER: Go back to what Paul warned the young preacher, Timothy, in 1 Timothy 4:1,2: “Some will *depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.*”

We are involved in a spiritual war. God and Satan are fighting for the souls of men. Satan tried to block God’s plan to redeem humans from sin. He thought the death of Christ would be the death of that plan, but actually it became the means to save us. When Satan saw that he was defeated on that point, and that the **church** — the **kingdom, the family of God**, made up of those who were being washed in Jesus’ blood in true baptism (Acts 2:38-47) — had come into existence, he devised a new way to keep people from being saved. By **deception** and **contradictory doctrines**, which he developed and spread through leaders within the church itself, **he created confusion and division.**

Those who were deceived by Satan’s doctrines were marked by God as having fallen from His grace (Revelation 2 and 3; Galatians 5:4; James 2).

But Satan’s lies didn’t end with corrupting teachings and practices *within the church*. Through division and creation of “churches” that *look similar* to the Lord’s church, but that were actually created by humans and teach doctrines contradictory to the Scriptures, **Satan has confused the entire world.** It is difficult to sort out truth from error. Millions of good, well-intentioned people have been blinded to what the Scriptures teach about the church which was established by Christ. They will live and die in denominations, believing them to be sanctioned by God. But the sad facts are that **no denomination was started by Christ, He cannot and will not overlook the doctrines and creeds that Satan has inspired men to develop, and there is no spiritual umbrella that brings all of this division into the one mythical “spiritual Church of Christ” of which denominational leaders speak.** Division is division, and Scripture condemns it.

So Satan hides the true church with all of the imitations he has brought into existence. And he has gone a step further. He knows that humans were created to seek and serve their Creator. Most of us **will** follow some sort of religion. Satan doesn’t really care how religious we are, as long as he can keep us from finding *the truth*. His goal is to prevent us from **being born into God’s family.**

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QUESTION: How does he do that?

ANSWER: By burying the true teaching about that birth under his lies. When Peter and the apostles were asked in Acts 2:38 what people must do to be saved, they answered, “**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” This is the **new birth** of John 3:3-5, which Jesus Himself said we **must** experience in order to enter His kingdom. So, **Scriptural baptism**, for the **forgiveness of our sins**, becomes **the door** into God’s family, the kingdom, the church. If people don’t go through that door, they are not saved.

Let’s make a comparison with your personal will. If you leave all of your possessions to your children, who will inherit? Just anyone who makes a claim? No. Only those born into your family are your children, and no one else can legally inherit your estate.

In the same way, the New Testament is Jesus’ will. It should be binding in every directive. But people have come along and said, “Oh, that’s not important.” or “You can do this... or this...” Even on such an important subject as being born into God’s family and having forgiveness of sins, what Jesus stipulated is disregarded. He plainly said that **a sinner must believe in Him and be baptized** — which is the water of the **new birth** (John 3:3-5) — **in order to be forgiven of sins** (Mark 16:16) and to **enter His kingdom**. But do you know what most denominational preachers say?

QUESTION: What?

ANSWER: That you don’t have to do anything but say “the sinner’s prayer” — just stop right where you are and ask Jesus to come into your heart and He will save you. But the amazing thing is that “the sinner’s prayer” is not even in the Scriptures! Men have made it up; men have decided that this is the way to be saved; men are standing right in the face of Jesus and saying that **they have authority to contradict what He has said** — and, so, people listen to those men. But when death comes, who is going to save the people who have depended on “the sinner’s prayer” instead of doing what Jesus commanded in His Will?

Almost every truth or doctrine in the New Testament has been taught wrongly by some religious group. But **Satan has focused most of all on the act of baptism**. Why? Because **it is the culminating act of obeying the Gospel**. It becomes the door into the house of God. If Satan

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can camouflage and *hide that door*, the masses will pass on by and will never find the way to become children of God.

So, that is why **baptism is denied** by almost all religious leaders, and why **“the sinner’s prayer” is substituted**. But the command of baptism is taught throughout the New Testament, and the sinner’s prayer is not there at all. That fact should help the honest seeker to know that “faith only” (James 2:14-24) falls into the category of Paul’s description of **“doctrines of demons”** and hypocritical **lies**.

We read in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 that Jesus is coming back *“in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not **know God**, and on those who **do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ**.”* Peter warned in 1 Peter 4:17 *“For the time has come for judgment to **begin at the house of God**; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who **do not obey the gospel of God?**”*

NOW, BACK TO THE ORIGINAL CHURCH...

QUESTION: So, what *did* happen to the church Jesus promised to start?

ANSWER: If you read Acts 1 you will see that Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit would come. In Acts 2, the promise was fulfilled, and the Gospel was preached for the first time to thousands of people. At the end of the lesson, convinced that they were guilty of crucifying the Son of God, many of them asked, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*

Peter’s answer is the same answer we need for the same question today. When we are convinced that we are sinners and need forgiveness, we ask, “What must I do?”

*“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**’”* (Acts 2:38).

QUESTION: What happened then?

ANSWER: Three thousand of them did **turn away from their sins** and were **immersed in the waters of baptism for the forgiveness of their sins**. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, their souls that were dead in sin were made alive again to God as **they were born into God’s family, the church**. In verse 47, we are told, *“the Lord added to the church daily*

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those who were being saved.” If we do the same thing today, we will be saved, washed in the blood of Christ, and added to the church of Christ, just like those people on that first day. We don’t have to be a part of any denomination. We can — and we **must** — by-pass all of these divisions created by the doctrines men have added to the Scripture. **We can be a part of that original church, the body of Christ, which is also described as His bride in Ephesians 5:23-33.**

QUESTION: What was the original church like? Was it very different from denominations today?

ANSWER: Some denominations are closer to the pattern of the New Testament church than others, but all have some differences. Remember, it is the differences that cause the division.

QUESTION: Are the differences so important?

ANSWER: If you made a will and then, after your death, thousands of people made thousands of changes, would those differences be important to you?

ANSWER: Yes! No one has the authority to change a will, once a person dies.

ANSWER: In the same way, through the inspired New Testament, Jesus has told us everything about how we are to live as individual Christians, and everything about how His church is to work, teach, and live.

In the four accounts of the life of Christ, He laid down many laws that were to govern His followers. The Sermon on the Mount set a new standard for personal behavior and interaction with one’s neighbors, as well as one’s enemies. Though much of what Jesus said has become a measuring guide for what we think of as “civilized behavior”, it was not the norm in the world when He was speaking the words. And it is not as much the norm today, even in so-called “Christian” nations, as we would expect. Humanism has eaten away at the belief that lying, cheating, immorality, abortion, and many other evils are actually wrong. And an increasing number of people who claim to believe in Jesus do little more than pay lip service to what He taught.

But sin *is* sin, and one who has been born into Christ’s family, and

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is wearing His name, crucifies Christ anew when he continues to practice a sinful life. The writer of Hebrews (10:26-31) warns Christians, *“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘The LORD will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

So the individual Christian must live with integrity, sincerely trying to grow to be like his heavenly Father and his elder Brother in his attitudes, his faith, and in all he says and does.

No human can live a perfect life. God’s grace and the cleansing blood of Christ will be necessary as long as we live, just as we are promised in 1 John 1:7-9: *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Galatians 5:19-24 contrasts the behavior of people of the world with the behavior of Christians: *“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

Christians are commanded to return good for evil, to seek what is best even for those who hate them, to live in the world as Christ lived before us. **All that is good is embodied in the life we are to live, and all that is**

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harmful and bad is forbidden. Read through the Gospel accounts, and then study the letters to the churches, which comprise twenty-one of the remaining books of the New Testament. If absolutely every human on the face of the earth stopped doing all of the sinful things, and started developing the fruit of God's Spirit in their lives, wouldn't this world be almost like heaven on earth? That's what God wants of His people, individually.

QUESTION: But I know a lot of *good* denominational people, and a lot of other good people who are not in any church. They're living like God asked. Doesn't He accept that?

ANSWER: You know, there's an interesting contradiction here. In the denominational world, when the command of baptism is mentioned, often the immediate cry is that "baptism is a **work**, but we are saved **by grace** — by **the blood of Christ**; our *good* works have nothing to do with salvation."

But then if a person dies, not having been very religious or a member of a church, the declaration is made, "He was a *good* man. You know God wouldn't condemn such a good person to hell." So, the human conclusion is that he is saved by his own goodness — and the blood of Christ wasn't necessary after all in his case. But where is the Scripture?

The fact is that we *are* saved by God's grace *and* the blood of Christ, but let's not forget that Romans 6:3,4 explains that **the way we reach the blood is in the act of being buried into His death in the waters of baptism.** And there is the further fact that baptism actually is not *a work* but the movement of *obedient faith* which puts us **into the grace of God.** We *cannot* be saved by our own goodness, because none of us are "good enough" without Christ. Galatians 3:27 says that **the way we enter Christ is through baptism.**

QUESTION: Why do you call the church "the church of Christ"? Does the name really matter?

ANSWER: In Acts 4:12, speaking of the name of Jesus Christ, we are told, "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is **no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.***" Ephesians 3:14,15 says, "*For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of **our Lord Jesus Christ**, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*" Disciples were called **Christians** first in the city of Antioch (Acts 11:26).

The church itself was often called simply "**the church**" (Matthew 18:17), because there was only one, so no "distinctions" needed to be

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made. It was also called “**the Way**” (Acts 19:9,23), **the church of God** (“which He purchased with His blood”, so “God” is having reference to Christ) (Acts 20:28), the **church of the Firstborn** (Hebrews 12:23), the **bride of Christ** (Ephesians 5:23-27; Revelation 21:2), **churches of Christ** (Romans 16:16), (having reference to *congregations* in numerous places, but the same *church*), and other designations. “Ekklesia”, the Greek word translated “church”, actually means “the body of believers that has been called out of the world”. This descriptive word is used more than 100 times in the New Testament.

QUESTION: As an organized group of people, how is the church of Christ different from denominations?

ANSWER: There are many ways. First, it does not wear a denominational name, and its members are called only Christians. Its head is Christ. There is no president of a board, no head bishop, no Pope. In the church’s organization, the highest office any human can hold is that of an elder (bishop, presbyter, pastor, and shepherd are other Biblical terms for the same office). 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 give the qualifications for elders. There must always be a plurality; there is no “head” elder, and they have no authority over sister congregations. Preachers or evangelists are not called “pastors” (an elder) or “Reverend” (God’s name only is “reverend”, Psalm 111:9). Men are to provide the public leadership in the church, according to 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. It was not a cultural practice, but God’s law, that women were not to be in authority over men.

In the church, there is no earthly headquarters. Each congregation is autonomous, led by its own elders and deacons.

The New Testament is the only creed of churches of Christ. We believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and that we cannot add to its words or subtract from them (Revelation 22:18,19).

In the New Testament, in public assemblies of the church, Christians worshiped God through **prayer** (Acts 2:42), **studying His word** (2 Timothy 2:2), remembering Christ’s death in a **weekly memorial** (Acts 20:7), **giving** of their money for the preaching of the Gospel and helping those in need (1 Corinthians 16:2); and they **sang praises** to God (Hebrews 2:12). Worship was intended to praise and glorify God. In this age, it has become an emotional experience in entertainment. People go to meetings because they “like” the show, in many cases. Entire bands have

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been added to the choirs of years past. Yet, neither of these is authorized by God's word. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 say that we are to **sing** and to **make the melody in our hearts**, as we teach one another by the words we are singing. Though musical instruments have been in the world since Jubal first invented them in Genesis 4:21, they were not added to "Christian" worship until **the eleventh century AD!**

QUESTION: But it's a small thing. Does it really matter?

ANSWER: When Nadab and Abihu changed God's worship in Leviticus 10:1,2, it mattered enough to God that He sent down fire from heaven and killed them. **Who gave any human the authority to change God's Will, as He has given it to us in the New Testament?**

QUESTION: What is the work of the church?

ANSWER: We must be involved in many things: In Matthew 25 Jesus painted a picture of His people helping the poor, the widows, orphans, ministering to the sick, the bereaved, the down-trodden. According to the inspired letters directed to the church, we are to defend the faith, and to teach and encourage each other, to be lights in an evil world, helping others to see God through our lives, as individuals and as a group.

But the foremost work of the church is to bring the saving message of Christ to the world, as He Himself commanded, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Amen. (Matthew 28:19,20).

QUESTION: There are many beliefs in the various religions regarding life after death. What does the New Testament teach about that?

ANSWER: *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men ... He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son'"* (Revelation 21:1-7).

The promise? Eternal life with God. *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout ... [and we] shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). †