

Getting to Know the Churches of Christ: Your Most Frequent Questions Answered

By Matthew Carver

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1. Who are the churches of Christ?

The churches of Christ are composed of men and women who desire to be only Christians and Christians only. To accomplish such a seemingly simple task, we seek to imitate the exact model set forth by the church of the New Testament as it was “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20)¹. We seek to take for our faith and practice nothing that cannot be derived through an explicit reading of the text of the Bible, and especially the New Testament, or logically inferred through its teachings. We intend to follow any and all examples that carry the blessings and endorsements of Christ Himself or His chosen ambassadors, the apostles, insofar as they are not colored by the social or cultural circumstances of their times. For instance, we do not travel to our engagements by ship simply because we find Paul so doing, nor do we recline at our tables because we can find an example in which Jesus did so. The examples of which we speak pertain only to those matters of faith and the practice thereof. We employ whatsoever means provided by our modern-day environment to carry out said examples. By way of illustration, we use songbooks to accomplish the singing of hymns (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16), and microphones, projectors, and Power Point to accomplish the teaching of the gospel (Matt 28:18-20, 2 Tim 2:2). These advancements in instrumentality and the use thereof in no way subtracts from, adds to, or otherwise alters the explicit requirement of the passages cited. Thus, we seek to be the church of which one can read in their New Testament.

2. What distinguishes the churches of Christ from the rest of the religious bodies in the world?

The distinguishing feature of the churches of Christ is our appraisal of the Bible as the sole and final revelation of God to man and our response to this solemn realization. Most every religious body in the world styling itself “Christian” will readily admit their belief in the Bible as the inspired revelation of the God of the universe. However, no other seeks to apply this admission as do the churches of Christ. By this it is meant that in spite of such beliefs by the various religious bodies of the world, many do not find its commands and examples authoritative for the Christian today. Thus, such religious bodies take unwarranted liberties with the Bible that the churches of Christ dare not take. For instance, some view its silence on certain matters as permissive in character. Hence, if the Bible does not explicitly condemn a certain practice, it must therefore be permissible. From this principle alone, many of the chief innovations witnessed in these religious bodies have

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations will be taken from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001.

derived their source. For instance, instrumental music in the worship of the church, Saturday worship in place of Sunday assembly, interpretative dance and drama within the worship of the church, the introduction of various forms of entertainment and “gimmicks” to attract crowds, and a host of other practices that go unmentioned by Jesus or His apostles are implemented on the basis that “The Bible doesn’t say not to do it” or “The Bible doesn’t say that if we do this we’ll be condemned for it.” Such a mode of interpretation will allow virtually any practice conceivable by the imagination of men to be introduced to the assemblies of the church. Those who adopt this procedure commonly fail to realize that the same interpretational method that they employ to permit the activities that they desire would also permit those that they would not desire (for instance, burning incense and praying to Mary is never explicitly forbidden in the Bible, but every Protestant body in the world would recoil at the thought of introducing such to their worship).

Upon this basis, the churches of Christ are extraordinarily unique in our honoring of the exact practices and teachings of the New Testament as it respects the faith, work, and worship of the church. We honor the organization of local churches (elders, deacons, saints- 1 Tim 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, Phil. 1:1), the method of praise expressly communicated by the writers of the New Testament (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16, Heb 13:15), the unity desired of God’s children by Christ and the apostles (John 17:20-21, 1 Cor 1:10, Rom 12:4-5, Rom 15:6, 1 Cor 12:20-25, Eph 4:4, Phil 1:27, Phil 2:2), the means by which individuals were instructed to be saved under the guidance of Christ and the apostles (Matt 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:12, 8:36-39, 16:15, 16:30-33, 18:8, 22:16), and the name by which the earliest disciples were to be known and in which they were to glorify God (Acts 11:26, 1 Peter 4:16), among many others.

3. What do you teach concerning the Bible?

The churches of Christ teach about the Bible that which the Bible teaches about itself. The classic statement on the nature and origin of the Biblical writings is provided by the apostle Paul: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). This statement was made with respect to the “sacred writings” upon which Paul’s son in the Lord, Timothy, had been reared as a child (2 Tim 3:15). These writings were undoubtedly the Jewish Scriptures, which we commonly know today as the Old Testament. This understanding is supported by the usage of the phrase “sacred writings” by ancient Jewish authors themselves to indicate the Old Testament documents.² In addition, we understand the OT to be the veritable word of God due to the reliance upon and appraisal of the text by both Jesus (cf. Matt

² Josephus, Flavius and William Whiston. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987) 10.210.

15:1-9, Mark 12:24-27, 12:35-37, Luke 4:1-13, John 10:35) and His apostles (1 Pet 1:10-11, 2 Pet 1:21, Heb 1:5-13, 3:7, et al.)

The churches of Christ likewise understand the New Testament to be the revealed word of God. We understand this by implication from Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit to His apostles, who were going to be "guided into all truth" (John 16:13) and whose memories were to be safeguarded from fault or error (John 14:26). We therefore understand that what these men taught through the mediums of the written and spoken word were, in fact, the very words which God chose to deliver to them through the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:13-15). Moreover, the writers themselves affirm this very thing. Paul wrote that the wisdom of God that had been hidden in ages past was now "revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10). Further, he testified that "we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual" (1 Cor 2:13). He also affirmed to his Ephesian audience with respect to his letter to them: "When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph 3:4-5). Also, Peter confirmed that what had been a mystery to the prophets of old was now "announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look" (1 Pet 1:12b). Additionally, Peter classified the writings of Paul with "the other Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16b). All of this serves to underscore the fact that the NT text is also the inspired and authoritative word of God. This therefore leads to the conclusion that the length and breadth of the documents contained in the Bible have been delivered under the guidance and supervision of God, which likewise implies their inerrant and infallible nature.

4. **What do you teach that an individual must do in order to be saved?**

As no other subject within the narrative of the Bible is more urgent and more consequential than that of salvation for the lost and alienated sinner, it is of critical importance that one give a Biblical answer to this momentous question. There is no room for speculation or fabrication here.

Before Jesus returned to Heaven to sit at the Father's right hand, He left His followers a parting command: "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). Thus, we understand that the two elements of faith and baptism are necessary in order for one to be saved. This harmonizes well with the other accounts of Jesus' last words to His disciples (cf. Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:45-47).

In Acts 2:38, Peter instructed the inquiring men and women on the day of Pentecost to "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”. As forgiveness of sins was here under consideration, we answer the inquiring sinner today with the same response: “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Of course, as was learned from the statement of Jesus in Mark 16:16, faith is also a necessary component. If the individual has yet to believe the gospel message but still inquires of forgiveness, we would therefore include faith in our instructions to that person.

Additional light can be shed on the conversion process when one reads the letter of Paul to the Romans. In chapter ten of that masterful letter, Paul writes: “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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom 10:9-10, KJV). Thus, we instruct all those seeking forgiveness to believe unto righteousness and to confess unto salvation.

Keeping in mind the lessons previously gained in the earlier passages, we then understand the proper and complete steps to forgiveness, in logical order, to be faith, repentance, confession, and water baptism. If this conclusion is accurate, we would expect to find these elements either explicitly mentioned or else otherwise implied when studying the accounts of conversion as they transpired under the immediate supervision of the Spirit guided apostles. As the book of Acts is the only book in which such conversions can be found, we must begin the search there. The chart below gives the results of such an investigation and serves to confirm the correctness of the conclusion drawn. ***One must believe, repent, confess, and be baptized in order to obtain the forgiveness of their sins.***

ACCOUNT	FAITH	REPENTANCE	CONFESSION	BAPTISM
Jews on Day of Pentecost- Acts 2:37-41	X	X		X
Jews in the Temple- Acts 3:19		X		
Samaritans- Acts 8:12	X			X
Simon- Acts 8:13	X			X
Ethiopian Eunuch- Acts 8:36-38	X		X	X
Cornelius- Acts 10:43-48	X			X
Lydia- Acts 16:14-15				X
Philippian Jailer- Acts 16:30-33	X			X
The Corinthians- Acts 18:8	X			X
The Ephesians- Acts 19:1-7	X			X

Saul (Paul)- Acts 9:1-18, 22:1-16				X
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5. Why do you teach that baptism is essential to salvation?

The churches of Christ teach only that which can be found in the pages of the Bible. Therefore, we teach baptism in the very words, and if necessary the definition of those words, in which the NT portrays it. The NT states: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16, ASV). Therefore, the churches of Christ teach that one must believe and be baptized in order to be saved. The elements of faith and baptism are both listed as the conditions of salvation in this passage. The one element required for condemnation in this passage is disbelief, with the logical inference that no one will be baptized if they do not believe.

When answering the inquiring crowd on the day of Pentecost, 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” (Acts 2:38). In this instance, the requirements of repentance and baptism are listed. Thus, the churches of Christ teach that one must repent and be baptized before forgiveness of sins can be granted.

When Ananias found Saul fasting and praying after his encounter with the risen Jesus on the Damascus road, his immediate instructions to Saul were: “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). Thus, the churches of Christ teach that one must rise and be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord, in order to facilitate the washing away of sins.

In addition to these, we find that the fruitful results of every period of teaching within the book of Acts involved water baptism (cf. Acts 8:12-13, 35-38, 10:47-48, 16:15, 30-33, 18:8, 19:4-5). We also find baptism described in terms that indicate that one is brought into intimate and vital union with Christ in the act of baptism (Rom 6:3-4, Gal 3:27). Finally, we find a characterization of baptism that states in undeniable terms “baptism now saves you...” (1 Pet 3:21, NASB). The churches of Christ seek simply to acknowledge and appreciate the language of the NT itself with respect to baptism. We therefore assign no greater role to baptism than does the NT, which unmistakably testifies that water baptism plays an integral and necessary role in man’s response to the invitation of salvation.

6. Does the fact that you teach that one must be baptized before they can be forgiven mean that you teach a works based salvation?

Not at all. Keep in mind that the churches of Christ instruct sinners to be saved using the exact words of Jesus and the apostles. Hence, when they were using the language already emphasized in questions 4 & 5, they

understood that their instructions in no way interfered with the economy of grace within which God saves men today. Rather, it seems that they understood their instructions to facilitate the extension of God's grace to fallen man.

Without question, salvation is portrayed in the NT as a matter "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:9, KJV). Moreover, Paul is clear when he declares that it is God "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim 1:8b-9, KJV). Many other passages could be cited along this line. However, what one must understand is that there are a variety of works considered in the Bible and therefore the meaning of the term in one passage may not be the meaning in another passage, whether used by the same or a different author. Let us consider the three primary branches of works that the Bible discusses.

Works of Law. Paul is clear when he writes to the Romans: "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20, ESV). He goes on to write: "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Rom 3:28). Without immersing ourselves in a discussion of whether Paul here means moral law generally or Mosaic Law specifically, it is quite clear that the principle, or ground, of justification is faith. In contradistinction from this, the ground or basis of one's justification is not in one's ability to uphold law. The reason for this is quite simple. If one bases their justification on their ability to maintain moral law, eventually their consciences will condemn them due their inevitable failure and transgression of that law. This Paul demonstrates when speaking of the Gentiles who did not have the Law of Moses, but who instinctively performed certain works of the Law as it was found naturally in their hearts. Hence, their thoughts of conscience will "either accuse or excuse them" (Rom 2:15, HCSB). Alternatively, if one bases their justification on their ability to maintain all aspects of the Mosaic Law perfectly, they will eventually become condemned by the Law due to their inevitable failings therein. As Paul writes elsewhere: "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them"" (Gal 3:10). Thus, works of law are excluded as they pertain to one's justification before God.

Works of Human Merit. As already indicated, Paul wrote to the Ephesians that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:9, KJV, cf. Titus 3:5). Thus, the works here under consideration are those of which man might boast. The connection to verse 10 is that we are created in Christ Jesus *for* good works. The sum of the thought is this: our salvation produces our good works, but our good works do not produce our salvation. Hence, the context identifies the works that hold no effect towards our salvation as those that are properly styled "good works." Of such, men may

boast that they are “good enough” or that God is obligated to save them according to their good deeds.

Works of Obedience/Works of God. The last category of works of which the Bible speaks relates to those actions that are required by God in order to obtain His blessing or to sustain one’s covenant walk with Him. These works might properly be styled the “works of God.” These should not be confused to imply those works that God performs Himself. Rather, these are the works that God requires of those who would do His will. Examples of such can be found in the NT. For instance, when asked about the works of God that the Jews should be doing, Jesus replied: “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (John 6:29). Thus, faith is classified as a work of God to be performed, or exercised, by those wishing to obtain His blessing. Merrill Tenney comments on this passage: “In this setting it refers to the works God requires of those who please him.”³ Marvin Vincent writes:

“Faith is put as a *moral act* or *work*. The *work* of God is to *believe*. Faith includes all the works which God requires. The Jews’ question contemplates *numerous* works. Jesus’ answer directs them to *one* work. Canon Westcott justly observes that “this simple formula contains the complete solution of the relation of faith and works.”⁴

To further illustrate, elsewhere it is said that repentance is something that God “grants” (2 Tim 2:25), as well as a product of “godly grief” (2 Cor 7:10) and God’s goodness (Rom 2:4). These descriptives would seem to imply that repentance also could be considered a “work of God.” Further, there are “works” to be performed which shall receive the blessings of Christ Jesus at an undisclosed future date. He says to the church in Thyatira: “The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations” (Rev 2:26). On the works under consideration in this passage, Friedrich Dusterdieck writes in the *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John*: “...they are such works as the Lord requires by the commandment which he imposes.”⁵

In view of all this, we must consider under what heading the action of baptism falls. Is it a work of the Law of Moses? We know that it is not because we find no allusions to water baptism under the Mosaic Covenant. Is it a “good work” of which man might boast before God, such as discussed in

³ Frank E. Gaebelein, Merrill C. Tenney and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9: John and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 75.

⁴ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002), Jn 6:29.

⁵ Friedrich Dusterdieck, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John*, trans. Henry E. Jacobs, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1887), 154.

Eph 2:8-9? As baptism is a command of God, having been neither originated nor established by man as a command to be obeyed, (cf. Luke 7:30), it is therefore not something of which man may boast. It is simply a requirement of God, as are the other works previously discussed under the heading “Works of Obedience/Works of God.” Thus, we are led to understand that baptism is not embraced in those works of which Paul speaks that have no bearing upon our salvation. It is neither a work of which man can boast nor a work of law. Consequently, the affirmation that baptism is an essential function of the conversion process in no way interferes with the manifestation of God’s grace, nor does it conflict with Paul’s instruction that salvation is not to be accomplished by works of law or works of human goodness.

7. Why do you baptize by immersion?

The churches of Christ baptize by immersion because this is the definition of the original term *baptizo* that translates the English word “baptize.” A few examples from Greek-English lexicons and Bible dictionaries should suffice to establish this:

- a. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*: “I. 1. to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge. 2. to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water... II. In the NT it is used particularly of the rite of sacred ablution, first instituted by John the Baptist, afterwards by Christ’s command received by Christians and adjusted to the contents and nature of their religion, viz. an immersion in water, performed as a sign of the removal of sin, and administered to those who, impelled by a desire for salvation, sought admission to the benefits of the Messiah’s kingdom.”⁶
- b. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*: “wash, assumedly by dipping, in a ceremonial way (Mk 7:4)”⁷
- c. *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*: “*bapto*- dip, immerse.”⁸
- d. *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*: βάπτω, “to dip in or under”⁹

⁶ J.H. Thayer. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 94.

⁷ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997. Ref #966.

⁸ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, vol. 1, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990-), 192.

- e. *Liddell and Scott's Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*: "to dip in or under water."¹⁰
- f. *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*: "βάπτω - dip, dip in."¹¹
- g. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*: "to baptize, primarily a frequentative form of *bapto*, to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc."¹²
- h. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*: "Its root meanings are 'dip,' 'immerse,' 'submerge,' in water, and is found in the context of John the Baptist's ministry of 'baptizing' for the forgiveness of sin, as well as Christian baptism."¹³
- i. *Harper's Bible Dictionary*: "rite involving water. The term is derived from a Greek word meaning 'to immerse in or wash with water' (Mark 7:4)."¹⁴

Moreover, we can deduce the mode of baptism from the imagery used in the NT. It was after Jesus "came up out of the water" at His baptism that He saw the heavens torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove (Mark 1:10). John baptized in Aenon because "there was much water there" (John 3:23, KJV). These two descriptions, one of Jesus and one of John, seem odd if immersion were not the mode of baptism. Moreover, we find Paul associating the image of burial with the baptismal act. He writes: "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). The image of burial is completely ruined if one employs the mode of sprinkling as a substitute for immersion. Among scholars commenting on this imagery, Everett Harrison states: "Apparently, he pictures burial with Christ, however momentarily, in the submergence of

⁹ Albrecht Oepke, "βάπτω, βαπτίζω, βαπτισμός, βάπτισμα, βαπτιστής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964).

¹⁰ H.G. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), 146.

¹¹ Logos Bible Software, *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Logos Bible Software, 2011; 2011).

¹² W.E. Vine. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 89.

¹³ Stephen D. Wrenn. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 89.

¹⁴ Paul J. Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 92.

the body under the baptismal waters.”¹⁵ Marvin Vincent writes: “There is probably an allusion to the immersion of baptism.”¹⁶ Paul also uses the same imagery in his letter to the Colossians: “having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:12). On this passage Richard R. Melick comments in the New American Commentary series:

The term “burial” is appropriate because of what it pictures. The Christian’s baptism is a burial. It pictures placing the believer in an environment incapable of sustaining life. For Christ, that meant the grave. For the believer, water symbolizes the grave. It also pictures the resurrection to a new environment of life. The reference to baptism, therefore, calls to mind the practice of immersion because immersion best pictures these truths.¹⁷

James D.G. Dunn writes in a similar fashion when commenting on the Greek text of Colossians:

The imagery is forceful, of sinking below the waters of baptism as a kind of burial. Baptism, presumably by immersion, represented mimetically the commitment to enter the tomb with Jesus after he has been taken down from the cross.¹⁸

Thus, the cumulative force of the lexical and linguistic evidence both from the definition of the original terms and the imagery employed by the NT authors serves to establish the correct mode of baptism as immersion.

8. What do you teach concerning Christian perseverance?

The churches of Christ teach no more than can be gleaned from the language and grammar of the Bible concerning the perseverance of the Christian. Of course, what is meant by perseverance in most religious circles is the idea of “once saved, always saved,” otherwise known as the

¹⁵ Frank E. Gaebelin, Everett F. Harrison, W. Harold Mare et al., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 10: Romans Through Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 69.

¹⁶ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002), Ro 6:4.

¹⁷ Richard R. Melick, vol. 32, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 259.

¹⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 159.

impossibility of apostasy. As such, we find no decrees of that kind in the entirety of the Bible. What we do find are passages that affirm the believer's confidence in their salvation if they persist in their hope and reliance upon Jesus Christ. Jesus once said concerning those who follow Him: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28, ESV). It is difficult to improve upon Merrill Tenney's comments on this passage in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*: "The sheep that belong to the Lord's flock are characterized by obedience, recognition of the shepherd, and allegiance to him. They are guaranteed eternal life and permanent protection."¹⁹ Far from affirming a "once saved, always saved" theology, the words of Jesus here indicate that those who "hear my voice" (present active indicative of Greek verb *akouo*; literally "keep on hearing") and "follow me" (present active indicative of Greek verb *akoloutheo*; literally "keep on following") are those who will never perish and always enjoy the safekeeping of the Lord. Thus, a constant pursuit in these areas is required in order to bask in the protection of the Lord. A translation of this noteworthy passage is provided by Kenneth S. Wuest, a Greek scholar who sought to provide a translation of the Greek NT that captured as much as possible the force and clarity of the nuances of the original language: "The sheep which are mine are in the habit of listening to my voice, and I know them by experience, and they take the same road that I take with me, and I give to them life eternal."²⁰ Thus, the force of the original language implies a habitual mode of life that will always heed and follow the teachings of the Great Shepherd. Although assuring to the faithful Christian, this passage in no way speaks to man's individual ability to freely choose to turn his back on things spiritual and pursue carnal indulgences once more. If anything, the language implies that the one who ceases to "hear" and "follow" the voice of Jesus will not receive the eternal life of which He speaks.

In addition to such passages as this, we also find certain scriptures that warn against the dangers of neglecting one's Christian convictions. The writer of Hebrews offers several such passages: "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God" (Heb 3:12). In another place, the writer offers:

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of

¹⁹ Frank E. Gaebelin, Merrill C. Tenney and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9: John and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 112.

²⁰ Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), Jn 10:27-33.

God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned (Heb 6:4-8).

Again, the writer states:

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:26-31).

Note the language employed by the author: "fall away from the living God" (Heb 3:12); "fallen away" (Heb 6:6); "profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified" (Heb 10:29). The clarity of thought expressed in this vocabulary is unmistakable. The Hebrew writer plainly understood the danger of apostasy and warned his readers to avoid succumbing to its destructive influence at all cost.

The apostle Peter also paints a vivid portrait of apostasy:

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire (2 Pet 2:20-22).

Note that Peter describes the prior state of these false teachers as having "escaped the defilements of the world," and to "have known the way of righteousness." However, if "again entangled" and "overcome," their "last state has become worse for them than the first." The language of the apostle loses all force if one affirms the impossibility of apostasy. Thus, although we affirm the confidence of the Christian as they walk steadfastly after the teachings of Christ, the churches of Christ also affirm that one can make the conscious decision to turn back to the world through sin and

unbelief, at which time “the last state has become worse for them than the first.”

9. What kind of music do you use in your worship?

The churches of Christ use vocal music only when engaged in worship to God. The reason for this practice is anchored in the authority of the Bible. As stated under Question #2, the churches of Christ are extraordinarily unique in the manner in which we seek to apply the realization that the Bible is the inspired word of Almighty God. We believe it to be completely authoritative for the church today. Consequently, we dare not add to, subtract from, or otherwise modify its instructions. Laboring, therefore, under this procedure we find within the NT various allusions to vocal music. In the music prescribed to the Ephesian church, Paul wrote that the saints in that place should be “addressing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Eph 5:19). In a similar instruction to the Colossians, the same apostle writes: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16). When discussing the praise that is to be offered to God, the Hebrew writer states: “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name” (Heb 13:15). Thus, because the mode of praise is specified as that of “singing” and the “fruit of lips,” the churches of Christ engage in worship using vocal music only. Noticeably absent from any of these passages is the command to “play” anything. Hence, in order to install the musical instrument into the worship of the church, one must add this element without Bible authority.

But is this principle of silence a legitimate form of establishing Biblical authority? The examples and teachings of the Bible affirm without question that it is. For instance, notice the case of Nadab and Abihu, who offered “unauthorized fire” (ESV) or “strange fire” (NASB) before the Lord: “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord” (Lev 10:1-2). Hence, the offering of Nadab and Abihu was rejected because it consisted of that which “he [the Lord] had not commanded them.” Their offering of incense was “unauthorized,” and as a consequence they were consumed with fire. Thus, their doom was brought about because of their choice to engage in a practice that was never commanded by the Lord.

An additional example that illustrates the Bible’s use of the principle of silence is found in Hebrews 7:14: “For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.” In this passage the author emphasizes that Moses spoke nothing, or remained silent, relative to anyone serving as priest from the

tribe of Judah. Instead, the Mosaic Law clearly announced that those of the tribe of Levi would be endowed with such duties (cf. Heb 7:11). Therefore, because Moses “said nothing” about priests arising from the tribe of Judah, the priesthood of Jesus Christ must signal the institution of a new and different covenant (cf. Heb 7:12). Again, the Bible demonstrates that the principle of silence is a legitimate form of communicating divine intent, thus validating the churches of Christ in their usage of this principle to establish the practice of vocal music only within the worship of the church.

10. Why do you not allow women to preach or serve in a leadership role?

The churches of Christ do not permit women to preach or serve in a leadership role simply because the apostles of Jesus Christ did not permit them to do so. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church” (1 Cor 14:33-35). Additionally, Paul writes: “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:11-14). Thus, we understand that the roles of women in this regard were not anchored in the cultural conventions of the time but rather in the very order of the first creation. We therefore understand Paul’s injunction here to apply in every location and throughout all ages. Most assuredly, women can still find a host of fulfilling and diverse functions within the church, but the sphere of those functions must be relegated by apostolic teaching.

11. What do you teach about the Holy Spirit?

The churches of Christ are careful to teach about the Holy Spirit only that which can be found within the pages of the Bible. Anything else would be sheer speculation. A perusal of the NT documents with respect to the nature and characteristics of the Holy Spirit reveals that He is both a person and divine. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is a divine person.

As it respects His personhood, the Holy Spirit is shown in various capacities that serve to establish His personal nature. For instance, He was said to have driven, or led, Jesus into the wilderness just prior to His temptation (Cf. Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1). He is said to “teach,” (John 14:26) “convict,” (John 16:8) “guide...speak...hears...declares,” (John 16:13). He is said to “glorify...take...declare,” (John 16:14). The decisions of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem respecting the matter of circumcision of the Gentiles “seemed good to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 15:28). Thus, from such testimony it

seems evident that the Holy Spirit is a personal Being. Otherwise, such qualities as ascribed to Him in these passages would hold no meaning.

As it respects His divine nature, we find that in the deception of Ananias and Sapphira concerning the proceeds from a parcel of land that the Holy Spirit and God are equated one with another. Peter speaks in one instance: "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?" (Acts 5:3). He then says in another: "You have not lied to man but to God" (Acts 5:4), thus equating Deity and the Holy Spirit. Further, the Holy Spirit is said to share features that only Deity could possess. For instance, He is referred to as "the eternal Spirit" in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 9:14). Of course, only Deity can be eternal. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is said to search "everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10). This displays an intimate association with the Father that could not possibly be expressed of any force or created thing. Lastly, the Holy Spirit is mentioned in contexts that establish that He is co-equal with the Father and Son. The most obvious of these is found in Jesus' command to baptize disciples "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19). Similar relationship is expressed in passages such as 1 Cor 12:4-7 and 1 Peter 1:2.

12. Do you believe in miracles?

The churches of Christ most certainly believe in miracles as recorded on the pages of the Bible. We believe that miracles were a feature of antiquity to be employed towards the confirmation of new revelation in the absence of a completed and widely available collection of sacred writings. The two great religious systems of the Bible, namely Judaism and Christianity, were inaugurated and confirmed by miraculous manifestations (cf. Exo 3:19-20, 4:1-9, 20:18-21 for the Mosaic Law and Acts 2:1-21 for Christianity). However, we believe the modern-day claims of miracle to be dubious and out of touch with Biblical instruction. The primary reason for this is that a careful reflection upon the manner in which miraculous abilities were bestowed and passed on in the days of the early church would seem to indicate that such abilities and gifts are no longer available. In the NT, the apostles of Jesus Christ were the only individuals who possessed the ability to transfer miraculous gifts. We see this when Peter and John are sent to Samaria at the news that those in that community had readily received the word of God (Acts 8:14). Until that time, the Samaritans had yet to receive the Holy Spirit even though they were obediently responsive to the preaching of Phillip (cf. Acts 8:12-13, 15-16). According to the record, Peter and John "came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." If Phillip, as a disciple of Jesus, could have imparted the Holy Spirit, it would seem entirely unnecessary for Peter and John to make the journey for that express purpose. The record then

states: "Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:17).

We find a similar situation when Paul arrives in Ephesus and encounters a small band of disciples. As these disciples had only received the baptism of John and were unaware of the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2-3), Paul baptized them in the name of Jesus. The record then reports: "And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying" (Acts 19:6). Thus, we see two instances in which the Holy Spirit was not given to believers until an apostle had laid hands on them. This is enough to establish that such was a normative practice for the early church (cf. Rom 1:11, 2 Tim 1:6).

From this practice we infer that once the apostles died, there was no longer any individual available who could impart spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands. Consequently, when those upon whom the apostles had conferred miraculous gifts died, there was no longer anyone within the church of Christ who could perform miraculous works. Thus, it becomes evident that miraculous gifts are not in the church today.

In addition to this, we have reason to seriously doubt the claims of miracles today simply due to the fact that such miracle claims are not of the same caliber as those in apostolic times. For instance, almost all of the miracles purported to have occurred have been healings of internal maladies that are unknowable and unseen with the naked eye. We are taking the subject's word for both the illness and the cure. This, of course, provides ample opportunity for falsehoods. Contrary to this, almost every miracle recorded in the NT was one in which the illness itself was outwardly visible, as was the cure. This was why Jesus and the apostles received such widespread acclaim as they did (and why modern-day faith healers are typically only respected within their own religious circles). Further, modern-day miracles always seem to take place amongst those already persuaded of the existence of such. If miracles are meant as confirmatory acts, one must conclude that the practitioners thereof are choosing their locations poorly or that the churches in which these acts are performed are ripe with non-believers who require these confirmatory signs (cf. 1 Cor 14:22).

There are other responses that can and have been given to support the cessation of miraculous gifts, but the foregoing provides a simple framework from which to approach the subject without extending this answer to far greater lengths than one would desire in a response of this kind.

13. Do you believe your group is the only one going to Heaven?

The churches of Christ believe exactly what Jesus believes with respect to who will ultimately go to Heaven: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 7:21). Furthermore, we hold the same understanding as the apostle Paul with respect to who will ultimately be lost.

It will be those “who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed” (2 Th 1:8-10). We do not maintain that one shall be saved simply because one attends a church of Christ or associates frequently with the churches of Christ. In point of fact, many “members” of the churches of Christ will be lost because they fail of the same criteria submitted by Jesus and Paul.

However, we realize that such an answer may compel the inquirer to ask a more pointed question: “Do you think, then, that the churches of Christ are the only ones who truly do the will of the Father in heaven?” The answer to this question cannot be adequately addressed in a simple “yes” or “no” formula. Rather, some detail is involved. First, churches of Christ believe that everything we teach as it concerns the work, worship, and faith of Christians everywhere is as accurate and true to the Bible as it possibly can be. As a consequence, the churches of Christ believe we occupy the safest course as it relates to the eternal salvation of our souls. Hence, we would prefer to answer the question in terms of who is the safest and who is less safe with regards to eternal salvation, or in terms of who is more likely and who is less likely to obtain the heavenly reward. When approaching the question in those terms, we affirm that we are the safest as it respects eternal salvation. Further, we believe that by using various Biblical examples and employing certain explicit instructions of the text that we can identify certain religious teachings and practices that are displeasing and unapproved in the sight of God. In some instances, we can even affirm that God is displeased to the point of condemning those who so teach or practice. In the final analysis, the test of all religious truth is the Bible. Hence, all religious claims and practices can be tried for accuracy using its proclamations as a standard. As God is the Judge of all men, only He can decide how much religious “error” or “inaccuracy” He will countenance in the Day of Judgment. In the meantime, the churches of Christ will continue to urge men to harmonize their religious beliefs and practices as closely as possible with the plain edicts of the Bible.

14. How are the churches of Christ organized?

The churches of Christ are organized after the pattern revealed in the NT. There is no organization higher than the local congregation. Each congregation is overseen by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23) appointed within that congregation based upon the qualifications given in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Beneath the elders are appointed qualified men to serve as deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13). We cannot read of any further organizational structure within the church of Christ in the pages of the NT. Thus, any additions or innovations on this arrangement must fall outside the scope of NT revelation.

15. **Where is your headquarters located?**

The churches of Christ have no earthly headquarters. If the location of our headquarters is to be identified at all, we must respond that such a central command is located in Heaven itself. We operate solely under the authority of Jesus Christ and that which He has delegated to His apostles. For anything else, we rely upon the authority vested in the local eldership by the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Bible (cf. Acts 20:28, 1 Tim 3:1-7, 1 Tim 5:17, Titus 1:5-9, Heb 13:17). Each local congregation is therefore autonomous and amenable only to its overseers and the instructions of the Bible itself. We reject any centralized source of authority on earth, such as conventions, societies, synods, or archdioceses due to their noticeable absence in the pages of the Bible. To appeal to such as expedients by which the work of the church is to be more effectively performed is to undermine the description of the church's function in the scheme of redemption: "... so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:10, ESV).

16. **Do the churches of Christ have a creed book or manual?**

The churches of Christ have no creed book or manual. We understand the Bible to be the complete and final revelation of God to man. Consequently, we believe that we cannot improve upon that which it has to say. If a creedal statement or manual of polity states more than what the Bible states, then it has stated too much and must therefore be in error (Prov 30:6, 2 John 9). If a creedal statement or manual of polity states less than what the Bible states, it has stated too little and is therefore in error (Deu 4:2, 12:32, Rev 22:18-19). If a creedal statement or manual of polity states exactly what the Bible states, then it is superfluous, being entirely unnecessary and worthless for the goal for which it was designed. The churches of Christ therefore endeavor to take the Bible alone as their sole guide for faith and conduct.

17. **How often do you eat the Lord's Supper?**

The churches of Christ observe the Lord's Supper each first day of the week. The scriptural support for this practice comes from the example found in Acts 20:7: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight." That the breaking of bread here refers to the Lord's Supper is almost beyond dispute. Scholars have commented on the phrase in this way:

A.T. Robertson: “The language naturally bears the same meaning as in 2:42, the Eucharist or the Lord’s Supper which usually followed the Ἀγάπη [*Agapē*].”²¹

Marvin R. Vincent: “To break bread. The celebration of the eucharist, coupled with the *Agape*, or love-feast.”²²

Richard N. Longenecker: “They met, Luke tells us, “to break bread” (*klasai arton*), which after Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 and 11:17–34 must surely mean “to celebrate the Lord’s Supper” (cf. comments on 2:42).”²³

John B. Polhill: In any event, at Troas we are given a glimpse into the main elements of an early Christian worship service. It was observed on the first day of the week and consisted of the breaking of bread (the Lord’s Supper) and preaching.”²⁴

A point of interest with respect to the allusion to the Lord’s Supper in this passage is the Greek infinitival clause of purpose: “to break bread” (κλάσαι ἄρτον). The force of such a clause, as its description implies, is to express the purpose of the object in view. Thus, the primary purpose of the Lord’s Day meeting in Troas was to break bread, or partake of the Lord’s Supper.

Further, one can draw clues as to the frequency with which the Lord’s Supper was observed by noting Paul’s language in 1 Cor 11:17-20. Paul uses the phrase “when you come together,” (v.17), “when you come together as a church,” (v. 18), and “when you come together,” (v.20) to describe the occasions of divisive practices of the Corinthian church during their worship. As the early church “came together” each first day of the week, and Paul addresses his corrections to the Corinthian observance of the Lord’s Supper “when you come together,” it seems natural to conclude that the Corinthian saints were observing the memorial feast each time they assembled for worship. That the Corinthians were known to meet each first day of the week is confirmed by Paul in 1 Cor 16:2.

²¹ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Ac 20:7.

²² Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002), Ac 20:7.

²³ Frank E. Gaebelin, Merrill C. Tenney and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9: John and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 509.

²⁴ John B. Polhill, vol. 26, *Acts*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 418.

Thus, it is clear that the Troas Christians assembled on the first day of the week for the primary purpose of observing the Lord's Supper. It is also clear that the Corinthians came together as a church each first day of the week. Further, it seems evident that the Corinthians observed the Lord's Supper when they came together. As a result of this cumulative evidence, the churches of Christ, in our efforts to imitate as closely as possible the example of the early church in faith, work, and worship, partake of the Lord's Supper every Sunday.

18. How do you secure your financial support?

The churches of Christ receive their financial support through the weekly free will offerings of the membership. The authorization for this practice is derived from Paul's command to the Corinthian church to "put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper" and to do so "On the first day of every week..." (1 Cor 16:2). In that particular context, Paul is addressing the means by which the Corinthians should collect money for the needy saints. However, taking this example as authorization for our practice, the churches of Christ utilize the first day of the week to collect an offering by which to support the needs and work of the local congregation.

19. What is the Restoration Movement, and isn't that when the church of Christ actually started?

In order to define any movement, it is always best to examine the testimony of several of its closest students and historians. Such a sampling as it relates to the Restoration Movement is as follows:

- a. *J.M. Powell*: "It is essentially a plea for Christ. The Restoration Plea rejects all ecclesiastical trappings, human names, human creeds and human doctrines. The fundamental message of this movement is to give preeminence to Christ in all things (Colossians 1:18)."²⁵
- b. *J.W. Shepherd*: "The close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century were characterized by efforts to get entirely on apostolic ground, originating almost simultaneously in widely separated localities and amidst different and antagonistic sects."²⁶
- c. *Dabney Phillips*: "The Restoration movement began as a religious thrust to restore in faith and practice the church that Jesus built in the

²⁵ J.M. Powell, *The Cause We Plead: A Story of the Restoration Movement* (Nashville: 21st Century Christian, 1987), 1.

²⁶ J.W. Shepherd, *The Church, the Falling Away, and the Restoration* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1999), 148.

first century. The New Testament was the pattern for the name, organization, work and worship of the church.”²⁷

- d. *V. Glenn McCoy*: “When the church went into apostasy, the “rule book” was virtually ignored for centuries. However, when men decided to return to the Bible in search for the pattern of the New Testament church, they found it. They followed the pattern that resulted in the restoration of the organization, worship, and work of the church that we read about in the New Testament.”²⁸
- e. *John Waddey*: “Churches of Christ throughout the world are pleading for the restoration of the original Christianity of the New Testament... Applied to Christianity, it suggests that we are seeking to put the church of Christ back into its original state.”²⁹
- f. *Richard T. Hughes*: “First, the defining characteristic of Churches of Christ... was the notion of the restoration of primitive Christianity—the attempt to recover in the modern age the Christian faith as it was believed and practiced in the first century.”³⁰

Hence, the Restoration Movement is a movement designed to restore the NT church in its purity and simplicity by calling men to return to the earliest practices of the church as it labored under the direct leadership and supervision of the apostles of Jesus Christ. Although the early church was fraught with difficulties, disputes, and misunderstandings, the apostles delivered its initial doctrines and practices as they were guided and influenced by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26, 16:13). Thus, as their teaching was a reflection of the mind of God itself (1 Cor 2:11-13, Eph 3:4-5), we understand that that which they established was in fact the perfect and final will of God for His church. Hence, any departures therefrom would be considered antagonistic towards the purposes of God (2 John 9).

This understanding of the Restoration Movement enables one to properly address the second feature of this question. As the churches of Christ understand themselves to manifest the qualities and features of the church that Jesus built, they do not consider themselves to have originated with the

²⁷ Dabney Phillips, *Restoration Principles and Personalities* (Henderson, TN: Hester Publications, 1999), 13.

²⁸ V. Glenn McCoy, *Return to the Old Paths: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Yorba Linda, CA: McCoy Publications, 1998), 11-12.

²⁹ John Waddey, *Sacred Principles on Which We Stand* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company, 2005), 191.

³⁰ Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of the Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1996), 1.

Restoration Movement. Rather, they trace their roots all the way back to the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus at which time the church was established (cf. Mark 9:1, Acts 1:4-8, Acts 2:1-4). Even though one may be unable to trace the existence of the pure and primitive church through the various stages of world history, the churches of Christ labor under the principle that a true church of Christ can be established at any time or place that a group of Christians decides to return to the Bible for their sole rule of faith, work, and worship.

20. How does one become a member of the church of Christ?

One becomes a member of the church of Christ exactly like men and women did in the days of the apostles. Nothing has changed, nor has a revelation from God been given, to suggest that induction into the church of Christ is somehow different today than it was in NT times. When we research the Bible's teaching on church membership, we find a method of entry into the church, or body of Christ (cf. Eph 1:22-23, Col 1:18), as a whole and a method of entry into a local congregation.

When describing the activities of the earliest members of the church, Luke writes of them that they were "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Thus, with reference to the general body of the saved, we find that the Lord Himself accomplished the individual additions as each person was being saved. Consequently, the Lord is responsible for adding members to His church as each individual appropriates His salvation. Therefore, an individual becomes a member of the church of Christ when they are saved, at which time the Lord adds them to His church. The steps by which one becomes saved by the atoning blood of Christ are faith (Acts 16:31), repentance (Acts 3:19, 17:30), confession (Acts 8:37, Rom 10:9-10), and water baptism (Acts 2:38, 22:16). These have been covered in greater detail in Question 4. Thus, it follows that membership in the church of Christ is conditioned upon these terms.

As it respects membership in a local congregation, a much less structured arrangement is described. When speaking of Paul, Luke records: "And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples" (Acts 9:26). Here we find no formal ceremony or activity described. The original word for "join" (*kollasthai*) means literally "to begin an association with someone, whether temporary or permanent."³¹ It has also been defined as "to seek closer intercourse with someone."³² Thus, it would appear that Paul simply made his wishes known to the Jerusalem congregation that he

³¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996). 34.22.

³²K.L. Schmidt, "κολλάω, προσκολλάω" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-).

desired to be a companion, or an associate, of their company. Hence, if one has already become a member of the church of Christ through the terms of salvation, no more than what we see exemplified by Paul is required of those seeking membership in a local body.