

“Must I Be in the Church of Christ To Be Saved?”

Outline:

A. What is the church?

1. Uses of the word church in Scripture (Acts 19:39; Ephesians 1:22-23; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 11:18)

B. What is the church of Christ?

1. Jesus is the Savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23)

2. The church of Christ is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23)

In considering this question, let's be sure we have a common understanding concerning what the Bible teaches about “the church of Christ,” since it relates directly to the above question.

A. What is the church?

The word church primarily means “the called out.” It identifies a group of people have been called out. The context in which the word appears will identify the purpose for which they are “called out.” Let's notice some different passages where this word appears.

Acts 19:39, 41 Here the word “assembly” is the equivalent of the word “church.” The context shows that this was a riotous assembly. This was an assembly (people “called out”) who praised the goddess Diana (verses 28, 34).

Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23 Here the word “body” and “church” are used interchangeably to describe God's people. So when Paul says “there is one body,” he is teaching “there is one church.” There is one group of people who are the “called out” of God. This group is called out of sin and into fellowship with God.

Sometimes this is called the “universal church” simply because it describes *all* who have been saved by the blood of Jesus. None are a part of the one church who have not accessed the blood of Jesus (For more on that subject, read **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**). This describes what occurred in Acts 2:47. When God saves men, they are then a part of the group of saved people, the one church.

Romans 16:16 Here the same word “church” appears, but instead of one church, there are many churches, identified as “churches of Christ.” Sometimes this particular use of the word church is described as the “local church.” It describes a group of people who are already members of the “one church” who agree to work together in a specific physical area. No local church includes every saved person in the world, but God intended for its members to be only those who are in the “one church.”

1 Corinthians 11:18 Here Paul uses the word church when speaking of the specific occasion of Christians assembling to worship God. We use a similar expression when we say “I am going to church this morning.” But this particular use is rare in the New Testament.

With this essential background, let's see what the Bible says about the church of Christ.

B. What is the church of Christ?

When people today hear “the church of Christ,” many of them think that it is one of many different kinds of churches. But we hope to turn men's minds back to Scripture, a time before there were many different kinds of churches—to the New Testament.

Ephesians 5:25 says that Jesus is the “Savior of the body.” If you remember that the body is the church, then we learn that Jesus is the Savior of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Since Paul is speaking of “the church” and not “the churches” then he is referring to that “one church” which we studied earlier.

And to whom does this church belong? To you, me, Satan, Christ, or another? Clearly, it is not the church of Satan, it is the church of Jesus Christ. This church is not a type of denomination, neither does it consist of denominations. The Bible identifies it as the group of people who belong to Christ. That is the simple meaning of “church of Christ,” or any related expression.

Who can hope to be saved outside of the body of Christ, the church of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23)? The Bible offers no other hope for the sinner. It identifies God’s people as the body, family, kingdom, or church of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Timothy 3:15; Colossians 1:13). Would we think that salvation is outside of the family of Christ or outside the body of Christ? These expressions are no different than the “church of Christ.”

What other group does the Bible teach has a hope of heaven? And who gave that group hope? Do you believe that only the body of Christ has hope? That is our appeal—for all to be in His body wherein they may be saved. The article **What Must I Do To Be Saved?** considers how to be a part of that body. Sadly, denominations today alter the Bible’s teaching on this subject. Please study it carefully (Acts 17:11).

Do not confuse the one church as being equal to a “local church.” We saw above that the Bible teaches a difference between the two. Does that mean that being a part of the local church is optional? Please read the article **The churches of Christ**.