

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

SOUL-SAVING LESSONS

“What Are the Differences Between the Church of Christ and Other Religions?” [Part 2]

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17). Welcome to the second part in our series of lessons dealing with “What Are the Differences?” What is the difference between the church of Christ and various religious groups started by men? Is there any difference? Why should we study or be a part of the Lord’s body? What is unique about the church of the Lord Jesus Christ?

In our last lesson we noticed four differences between the church of Christ and other religious groups. By way of reminder, here they are again. First, the structure of authority in the Lord’s church is different. We do not have a hierarchy. There is no earthly headquarters. We do not have any one man here on Earth who is our leader. Each individual member is amenable to God. The Word of God has already been settled in Heaven (Ps. 119:89). Jesus is the Head of the church. Second, the source of authority is different. We do not look to men, to the writings of the “church fathers,” or to creed books or books of discipline. The Bible is our only authority. The Scriptures say in 1 Peter 4:11 that we are to “speak as the oracles of God.” We believe in going by the Bible and the Bible only. Third, the name of the Lord’s church is different. By “name,” we mean “the biblical description”—the names of which you read in the New Testament such as “church of Christ” (Rom. 16:16), “church of God” (2 Cor. 1:2), “the church that Jesus built” (Mt. 16:18), and other similar phrases are descriptions of ownership. They describe the Person to Whom we belong. We do not belong to some man. There is no authority in the Bible for naming any religious group after religious leaders. There is authority only for following the teaching of Christ. The fourth difference is that the church’s plea for unity is different. Jesus prayed that we could “all be one” (Jn. 17:20-21). The plea of the Lord’s body is that men and women will be united on truth. We must endeavor to keep “the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). We plead for unity, with the Bible being our only guide in religious matters.

Today we will be examining four more differences between the church about which we read in the Bible, and religious groups that exist today. The first is that the music is different. One of the most obvious differences between the church of Christ and other religious groups is our singing. We believe and teach, as do the Scriptures, that a cappella music (singing with the voice) is what God has commanded in the New Testament. Some people say to those of us who are members of the church of Christ, “You don’t believe in music!” That is not true. We believe in singing. We believe in music because God has commanded it. But there is no authority for mechanical instruments of music to be found anywhere in the New Testament. We must understand that we are living in the Christian Age today. We are living under the authority of the New Testament. Ephesians 2:14 and Colossians 2:14 both teach that the Old Law was abolished when it was nailed to the cross. The writer of Hebrews said that the Old Law is an obsolete law that was vanishing away during the time of the writing of the New Testament (Heb. 8:12-13). It is a dead law for

us (Rom. 7:1-4). We are not going to be judged by the Old Law. We are going to be judged by the law of Christ (Jn. 12:48). So we are not asking, "What did people do under the Old Testament?" We are asking, "Is there any authority in the New Testament for mechanical instruments of music?" The problem is that there is not one reference in the New Testament to the church on Earth ever using mechanical instruments of music in its worship. Everything the New Testament says about singing refers to a cappella music. Romans 15:9 speaks of singing. Colossians 3:16 speaks of singing. Hebrews 2:12 says, "I will sing of you in the assembly." James 5:13 asks, "Is any among you happy? Let him sing." In 1 Corinthians 14:15 we read, "I will pray with the spirit and the understanding, and I will sing with the spirit and the understanding." In Acts 16:25 we read that Paul was in prison in Philippi, where he and Silas were "praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." In Matthew 26:30 we find Jesus and His disciples singing a hymn. But to show that God wants singing, we need to look at the words of Ephesians 5:19. What is it that God asks of the church today concerning its music? The passage says that we are to "speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." When it comes to church music, what does God want? He wants speaking—in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. He wants songs from Scripture (such as the psalms) that deal with spiritual/biblical matters. He wants hymns that glorify and honor Him. So, we "speak in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." We sing one to another, which is a reciprocal action. Colossians 3:16 teaches that in our singing we are to teach and admonish one another by singing and making melody **where**—on an organ or piano or drum or guitar? No. God says we are make melody "in our hearts." How do we sing acceptably to God? We do so by making melody in our hearts. We find an explanation of that in 1 Corinthians 14:15 where we see that we are to "sing with the spirit"—which refers to our emotions, our zeal, and our desire. We also are to "sing with the understanding." When our minds are engaged and our emotions are engaged, and we are governed by the Word of God regarding the songs that we sing, then truly we are worshipping God acceptably. Christians must do only those things that we are told specifically to do.

Someone might say, "I see what you're saying. But the Bible never says that instruments are wrong. Yes, it says that we are to sing. But God doesn't say that we **can't** use an instrument." The trouble with that type of attitude is that when God tells us what He wants, that is **all** He wants. We are not to add to or take away from the Word of God (Rev. 22:18-19). Paul illustrated this in 1 Corinthians 4:6. Oh, how I wish people could understand the principle of this great passage! Paul is showing some things through himself and Apollos. In this passage, Christians are told "not to think beyond that which is written." Think about that. We are "not to think beyond that which is written." If we could just get it engrained in our minds, "If the Bible doesn't say it, we're not to even think it." If it is not written in God's Word that mechanical instruments of music are to be used in worship, then we are "not to think beyond that which is written."

How do we work in other areas of our lives? Let's say that you are going to order a pizza. So, you call up the local pizza place and tell them that you want a large pizza with pepperoni and black olives. The pizza place says, "OK. It will be about 30 minutes." The doorbell rings, you answer the door, and the pizza man is there to deliver your pizza. But when you open the pizza you see that while it has pepperoni and black olives, it also has anchovies and pineapple on it. Are you going to accept that? No. You will say, "I didn't tell you to put those things on my pizza." How would you respond if the fellow said, "But you didn't say **not** to!" Would you say, "Oh, yeah, I guess you're right. I guess I'll take the pizza." No. You would say, "When I told you what I wanted, that was **all** I wanted, and it excluded everything else." God works the same way. When God tells us what He wants by

saying that we are to “sing and make melody in our hearts,” and there is no mention of mechanical instruments, then we are not to add what we want into worship of Him. Where did mechanical instruments of music originate in the worship service of the church? They were brought in by men hundreds of years after the New Testament church began. The music used by the Lord’s church is different because we know that we are to worship God only with our voices (as authorized in Scripture).

A second difference is the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper. In Matthew 26:26-29 Jesus taught about the Lord’s Supper. He taught that the unleavened bread represented His body, that the fruit of the vine represented His blood, and that Christians were to partake of those emblems when the kingdom came into being. The Lord’s Supper is to be observed “until Christ comes again” (1 Cor. 11:26). It is a continual practice that God has established for the church to observe. But how often are we to observe it? Only at Christmas or Easter? Once a month? When we feel like it? What does the Scripture say concerning the observance of the Lord’s Supper? Is it something that God has left up to us? Absolutely not! The Scriptures teach us to observe the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week. There are a couple of passages we need to examine. In Exodus 20:8 God said to the Israelites, “Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.” How often did the Israelites remember the Sabbath? One a month? On special holidays? No. They correctly understood God’s command to mean that whenever a Sabbath rolled around, they were to keep it holy. The same is true when God uses similar language in the New Testament. Notice the words of Acts 20:7. How often did New Testament Christians observe the Lord’s Supper? “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together, what was their purpose? They were there “to break bread.” Christians were coming together, with one of their central purposes being to remember the Lord’s death. We learn from 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 that they were coming together **every** first day of the week. If they were coming together every first day of the week, and if every week has a first day, then we are to observe the Lord’s Supper on the first day of every week. That is how Christians did it in the first century. And that is what we need to do today. Someone asks, “Why on the first day of the week?” Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week (Mt. 28:1). Thus, that day has great significance. If you look at the Jewish calendar you will see that the Day of Pentecost (when the church began) was on the first day of the week (Acts 2). Jesus assembled with His disciples after His resurrection on the first day of the week. Christians met on the first day of the week. Christ’s ascension (Acts 1:3) was on the first day of the week. The first day of the week—not the Sabbath—is the day that has significance for Christians. Someone might ask, “How can we know when we are to partake of the Lord’s Supper?” If we do not partake of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of every week, then when do we partake of it? There is no authority for partaking of the Lord’s Supper just on what people designate as Christmas or Easter. There is no authority in the Bible for partaking of the Lord’s Supper just on the first of the month or once a month. God has given us specific instructions regarding when to observe the Lord’s Supper. Yet people seem to get confused when it comes to Acts 20:7. They ask, “How can we know that we need to keep the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week?” But they do not seem to have that problem when it comes to collecting funds. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we see basically the same language. When we come together, we are commanded to “lay by in store on the first day of the week.” Why is it people can understand that when it comes to giving, it means “every” first day of the week? Everywhere you go, people give “every first day of the week.” We understand it in one place, but we do not seem to be able to understand in the other. That shows the inconsistency in certain people’s beliefs.

The New Testament church is unique because of the music it uses. God has authorized only singing. The church also is unique because it observes the Lord's Supper just as first-century Christians did—on the first day of every week. Third, the Lord's church also is unique because teachings on salvation are different in the church for which Jesus died, compared to what so many teach today. There are various and diverse teachings on salvation out there today. Some say that God "elects us" with no action on our part whatsoever. Some teach that "the elect" cannot reject or resist salvation. Others say that certain people are predestined to go to Heaven, while others are predestined to go to Hell. Many people teach that a person is saved at the point of belief, and that all a person has to do is "just believe." Some teach that a person must "say the sinner's prayer and accept Jesus into his heart." Some say that if you will lay your hand on the television, you will be saved. There is a multitude of different beliefs concerning salvation. But we are concerned with only one: What does the Bible teach about salvation? Be sure that God does not teach the Calvinistic idea of predestination. Each of us can choose for ourselves this day whom we will serve (Josh. 24:15). We can make sure that our calling and election are sure (2 Pet. 1:10). Each of us can be sure that it is not at the point of belief alone that we are saved since James 2:24 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." The only time the phrase "faith only" is used in the Bible is when God says the exact opposite. You can be sure that salvation does not come from saying a "sinner's prayer" or from laying your hands on the television or radio. Usually you will hear the sinner's prayer going something like this: "Dear Jesus, I recognize you as Savior of my life, and I now ask you to come into my heart and save me." There are other versions, but that is the gist of it. Where do we find that in the New Testament? You can read from Matthew all the way through Revelation, and you will not find such a sinner's prayer a single time. Billy Graham and others have repeated it as if it was on every page of the Bible. But where in the Bible do we find the sinner's prayer? You can look and look and look, but you will not find it. Why not? Because it is not there! Acts 9:11-13 might be the closest you could get. But the man who was praying there was not yet saved. Saul had been praying for three days. Yet he still had to obey God in baptism when Ananias came to him (Acts 22:16). If there was ever a man who was saying many a sinner's prayer, it was Saul. Yet he was not saved until he obeyed God in baptism.

What does God's New Testament church teach about salvation? We teach the exact same thing the Bible teaches. A person must hear the Word of God. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Once a person has heard the Word and recognizes that it is the only authority in matters of salvation, he then must believe in Jesus. Belief is essential because Jesus taught, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will surely die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). A person must be willing to repent. In Acts 2:38 the people were told, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." A person must be willing to confess Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. In Romans 10:10 we read, "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This is something we do because it is part of God's plan for salvation. Then the Scriptures teach that a person must be baptized before salvation occurs. So many people in the world say that a person can be baptized after he is saved, or that a person is saved at the point of belief and that baptism is simply something that is done to identify that person as a Christian. But that is not what the Bible says. In Acts 2:37 the Jews asked Peter, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's answer was, "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." What is the purpose of baptism according to Acts 2:38? It is not to identify that a person is already saved. It is "for the forgiveness of sins." Someone asks, "How does that teach that bap-

tism is essential?" What is it that separates us from God? Isaiah 59:1-2 says that it is our sin that separates us from God. If sin separates us from God, then the moment that our sins are forgiven is the moment that we can know we are saved. When are sins forgiven? "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." What makes the church of the Lord unique in regard to its teaching on salvation is that its teaching about baptism is in line with the teaching of God. In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Did Jesus say that baptism should come after salvation? No, not at all. In John 3:5 Jesus said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Peter said that "baptism does also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). Paul said in Galatians 3:27 that we are "baptized into Christ." If "all spiritual blessings are in Christ" (Eph. 1:3), if salvation is found only "in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10-12), and if baptism puts us "into Christ," then we cannot have all spiritual blessings and salvation until we have obeyed God's teaching concerning baptism. It is essential to salvation. If someone says to you today, "Baptism has nothing to do with salvation," you can know that they are not a part of the group of which you read in the New Testament.

Fourth, the teaching of the security of the believer is different in the Lord's church than it is in many religious groups. Many teach that once a person is saved, he can never be lost. This doctrine is known as "once saved, always saved" or "the impossibility of falling from grace." Basically it says that once you become a Christian, you are eternally secure. No matter what may happen, and no matter you may do, you cannot go to Hell. Taken to its logical end, a person could not go to Hell if he wanted to! Is that what the Bible teaches? Not at all. There are clear-cut examples which show us that a person can fall from grace. Probably the clearest is the example of Simon. In Acts 8 Philip had gone down to Samaria to preach the Gospel. Simon obeyed the Gospel by being baptized. But his former trade was that of a magician. He had been tricking people. Then, through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he sees the gift of the Holy Spirit being given to people. After a Christian, he says, "I'll give you money to buy that gift from you." Peter said, "You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. Your money perish with you." What did Peter say would happen to Simon if he did not repent? He was going to perish. That meant he was going to be lost.

Think of Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:18-20). Paul said, "I delivered them to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." They were under Satan's control and in his grip. They were going to be lost with Satan and his angels if they did not repent. Think about Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10. Paul said, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." What about Judas? Even one of the men closest to Jesus was lost (Acts 1:25). Some of the children of Israel were lost. We are to "take heed, lest we fall as they did." There are some Scriptures that undeniably teach that a person can fall from grace. Probably the clearest is Galatians 5:4. Before we look at it, remember that men today say, "A Christian cannot fall from grace." But one of the things that is so great about the Bible is that God takes the very language of false teachers and shows their error using their own language. Galatians 5:4 says, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." To whom was Paul writing? He was writing to the churches of Christ in Galatia (Gal. 1:1ff.). He was writing to Christians who were thinking about going back to the Old Law. He tells them that if they do that, they will be cut off from Christ. They will be estranged from Him. He tells them, "You have fallen from grace." Someone might say, "Well, they had just fallen away from 'the center of grace.' They were still in the circle of it." That is not the language of the New Testament. The literal Greek word is *ek*, which means "out of." They were in God's grace, but they had fallen out of it. Can a

person be saved outside the grace of God? Absolutely not! Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Mt. 7:21). Revelation 3:5 tells us that certain Christians were going to have their names removed from the Book of Life if they did not remain faithful. Over and over again we see that a person **can** fall from grace. **Should** a person? No—because God has given us everything we need to remain faithful. It is possible for us to fall from grace, but we do not have to fall from God’s grace.

What is it that makes the church of Christ different? We follow the New Testament pattern regarding music to be used in worship. We sing and make melody in our hearts. We follow the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, just as first-century Christians did in Acts 20:7. We teach God’s full plan of salvation, including what the Scriptures teach that baptism is for (remission of sins). We teach, as do the Scriptures, that a Christian can fall from grace, which shows us that we must be faithful unto death.

Are you sure that you are a part of the church of which you read in the New Testament? Or, have you gotten caught up in the teaching of men? Can you find the church of which you are a part mentioned in the pages of the Bible? If not, how can you follow God’s authority and remain in that group? We must check and double check to make sure that what we believe, what we are being taught, and what we are hearing others say is true to the Word of God. Remember, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death” (Prov. 16:25). A lot of people say, “I think that’s right” or “I believe this is right” or “Mom and dad believe that this is right.” Don’t do that! Ask the question, “What does the Scripture say?” (Rom. 4:3). As the question found in Jeremiah 37:17—“Is there any word from the Lord?” I want to encourage you to study your Bible to make sure that you are in the right church and make sure that you are right with God—because your soul is the most important thing you possess. I want to plead with you to make sure that you are right before you stand before the Judgment of God. (Jer. 10:23)

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND OTHER RELIGIONS?” [PART 2]

1. According to Matthew 28:18-29, who has the right to dictate what we do in acts of worship to God?
2. Explain the importance of the statement in Colossians 3:17 in regard to the necessity of having biblical authority for whatever we do in worship to God.
3. Explain the meaning of Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 4:6 in regard to the importance of authority for things we do in worship to God.
4. What question did Paul ask in Romans 4:3 that Christians today should ask as well?
5. Romans 15:9, 1 Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:19, and Colossians 3:16 all authorize only one type of music in worship to God. What type of music is that?
6. Instead of saying, “The Bible doesn’t say that we **can’t** use instruments of music in worship?,” what should people be saying in regard to music in worship?
7. According to Ephesians 2:14-15 and Colossians 2:14, what did Jesus do to the Old Law?
8. According to 1 Corinthians 11:26, how long are Christians to observe the Lord’s Supper?
9. According to passages such as Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, how often are Christians to do things such as observing the Lord’s Supper and giving of their means?
10. Where in the New Testament is a person told to “say the sinner’s prayer and ask Jesus to come into his heart” in order to be saved?
11. In Acts 22:16, what did the prophet Ananias tell Saul to do to be saved?
12. Some people today teach that baptism is not essential to salvation. What do such passages as Mark 16:15, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, and 1 Peter 3:21 have to say about that?
13. According to the New Testament, what are the five steps in the biblical plan of salvation?
14. What does James 2:24 say about being saved “by faith only”?
15. According to 2 Timothy 2:10, where is salvation found?
16. According to Ephesians 1:3, where are “all spiritual blessings” found?
17. According to Galatians 3:27, how does a person get “in Christ”?
18. What important point is taught in Galatians 5:4?