

## Top Ten Questions about the Churches of Christ

### 10. "WHERE DID THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ORIGINATE?"

The Church of Christ in America appeared as a renewal movement during the Second Great Awakening; a sweeping religious revival centered at Cane Ridge, Kentucky in 1801. A Presbyterian clergyman, Barton W. Stone, had organized these revival meetings in response to the immorality and spiritual deadness that characterized the western frontier of our new nation. These meetings drew nearly twenty thousand people to the Kentucky woods where a massive revival swept through the area for days at a time. This kicked off the Second Great Awakening in America, which produced huge growth in Baptist and Methodist churches and also gave birth to new groups such as the Cumberland Presbyterians, the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ and the Church of Christ. As revival swept across America, clergymen like Barton Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell (Scottish Presbyterians), James O. Kelly (Methodist) and John Raccoon Smith (Baptist), among others, began to search for a new model for the church in America. This new model became known as the Restoration Movement, which emphasized several basics, such as de-emphasizing denominational differences and being "Christians only," looking to the Bible only, instead of denominational manuals, to establish policy for worship and Christian living, and attempting to restore the spirit and simple practices of Christianity depicted in the New Testament. Most modern Churches of Christ still believe in these ideals and attempt to live up to this high calling.

### 9. "WHY DON'T YOU USE MUSIC IN YOUR WORSHIP SERVICES?"

We do use music, but we don't use musical instruments to accompany our singing. While many of our friends in other churches (even some Churches of Christ) use instruments, most of our congregations don't for several simple reasons. Early Christianity included two groups of people: Jews with a background of instrumental music (see Psalm 150) and pagan Gentiles who also worshipped with musical instruments. Yet when the church was established in about 33 A.D., those early Christians worshipped without such instruments. According to Dr. F.W. Mattox, a scholar of early church history, musical instruments weren't used until the fifth century, and organ music didn't become part of Christian worship until the eighth century. Even today the majority of Christian groups worldwide still sing without instruments, or a cappella (literally meaning of the chapel or in the way of the church). So, it seems logical, considering our goal of restoring a New Testament - type Christian worship, that a cappella singing would fit that model. Besides, the only musical instrument God ever created is the human voice. Man created all the rest. Perhaps the purest form of musical worship on earth is found in human voices.

### 8. "AREN'T YOU THE ONES WHO DON'T BELIEVE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?"

No, we definitely believe that God inspired every word of the Old Testament. Even the New Testament says, "*For everything written in the past was written to teach us...*" (Romans 15:4). Without the Old Testament revelation, we couldn't understand the New Testament. But the Old Testament isn't our covenant with God. As Christians, we're under the new covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13). That's why Christians don't offer animal sacrifices in worship, stone adulterers to death, abstain from pork, or keep other regulations demanded by the old covenant.

#### 7. "HOW DOES A PERSON JOIN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?"

By simply becoming a Christian. Just as in the New Testament, we have no special rules for joining our fellowship and no votes are taken to screen potential members. When one accepts and obeys the Gospel, Christ adds him or her to the universal, worldwide church (Acts 2:47), and then that believer joins a local group of disciples to continue his or her growth and service to Jesus.

#### 6. "WHY ARE YOU SOMETIMES CALLED 'CAMPBELLITES?'"

In the early 1800's two men, Thomas Campbell and Alexander Campbell (father & son), came to America. These two Presbyterian clergymen became leaders in the religious idealism that sprang up after the Cane Ridge revival, and became involved in the Restoration Movement. They believed that Christianity had become too institutionalized, divided, formalized, and denominational. They left their denominations and rallied around the Bible as their only religious guide. Their intent was to bypass the confusion of denominational differences and go back to the simple New Testament forms of worship and church life. Because the Campbells were two of the main intellectual leaders of this movement, and since Churches of Christ are descendants of the movement, some people have called us "Campbellites." However, Churches of Christ insist on wearing only the name of Christ and not the partisan names of human beings.

#### 5. "WHAT DENOMINATION ARE YOU?"

What makes a church a denomination? It has a national organization, a headquarters here on earth, a hierarchy of clergy, a handbook or creedal statement of belief (in addition to the Bible), and various committees and groups that operate above and outside the local congregation, while making policy for the local churches to follow. Because of our beginnings in the Restoration movement, Churches of Christ have attempted to minimize these denominational trappings. We prefer to operate as local self-governing congregations answerable only to Christ. While we cooperate with each other, and often with other Christian groups, we desire to be what one of our founders summed up in his statement: "We're Christians only, but not the only Christians."

#### 4. "WHY DO YOU EMPHASIZE BAPTISM SO MUCH?"

Because the Bible does. In fact, the New Testament mentions baptism fifty one times. Every conversion to Christ recorded in the book of Acts (the beginning of the church) ended in a water baptism. And, every New Testament writer considered baptism an essential part of a believer's response to Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote that the Gospel, which saves us, is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ on our behalf - to atone for our sins (1 Cor. 15:1-4). He also wrote that water baptism is a faith-inspired re-enactment of that Gospel. Baptism is a symbolic death, reflected by burial in water (instead of dirt) and a symbolic resurrection acted out by rising from the water (Romans 6:1-7). Christ considered it so important that not only was He baptized, but He included this teaching in His marching orders as He sent His apostles out to make more disciples (Mark 16:15-16).

### 3. "WHY DO YOU TAKE THE BIBLE SO LITERALLY?"

In any form of communication, some statements are literal and some aren't. A stop sign on the street corner sends a message: "STOP!" It is to be taken literally. But when a car at that stop sign has "Mustang" written on it, we know that's a symbolic statement - the car isn't literally a horse. In our approach to Biblical interpretation, we try to separate the literal and symbolic by using a few common sense rules: What did the Biblical statement mean to those who originally heard it? What was the context? What does it mean for us today? What was the writer's intent, to be symbolic or literal? Those life-or-death statements in the Bible (*"If you do not believe that I am (He), you will indeed die in your sins"*) (John 8:24) we take at face value and teach them accordingly.

### 2. "WHY DO YOU HAVE COMMUNION EVERY SUNDAY?"

Because of the nature of the Communion. Jesus said that when we celebrate this feast, He eats it with us (Mark 14:25). Each time we have Communion, we participate symbolically in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). We also show our unity as a body, remember His sacrifice, His death and resurrection (1 Cor. 11:17-34). The Communion service is one of the most important reasons we meet on Sunday. Paul and his companions thought it so important that they waited seven days in one town so they could assemble with the church and celebrate the Communion meal (Acts 20:6-7).

### 1. "DON'T YOU TEACH THAT YOU'RE THE ONLY ONES GOING TO HEAVEN?"

Most religious groups have a few misguided people who think they are the only ones going to Heaven. Churches of Christ are no different. But membership in a church can't save anyone; Christ's church is an assembly of the already saved. One can be a member of the best church on earth and still miss Heaven.

So what saves us and gets us to Heaven? Jesus does. The Gospel (Good News) is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and was raised from the dead on the third day (1 Cor. 15:1-4). It's God's action through Christ that saves us, not membership in a church. When you stand before Christ in the judgment, He won't ask to see your church membership card, but He will ask, "Do I know you?" And the only way to know Jesus is through His Gospel - believing that He is God's Son, that He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, that He died and rose again on our behalf of our sins, and that He is the undisputed Lord of all. Once a person hears and believes this from the heart, repents (turns away) from their sins, confesses Jesus as Lord and is baptized for the remission of their sins, that person moves into the Christian life - the life of the saved (Acts 2:22-41). So, the only ones who are going to Heaven are those who've been truly reborn spiritually. As Jesus put it *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again"* (John 3:3).

*For more information, please visit us!*

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