

Must One Be In The Church To Be Saved?

By Jimmy Stevens

INTRODUCTION: Many religions teach, “One church is as good as another.” “Saved without being in a church.” “Church doesn’t save, so which church doesn’t matter.” “Be a Christian first then be part of the church of your choice.” “A Christian can be simply one who is a moral, decent person.”

- A. Is it “in” or “out” of the church? Jesus has the right to say “when” and “where” of His salvation.
- B. He wants all saved. 1 Tim 2:3-4

I. God’s boundary around salvation

- A. Noah found salvation in the ark. 1 Pet 3:19-20. The rest were killed because they were outside of the ark.
- B. Where has God placed salvation from sin today? “in Christ”, 2 Tim 2:10, Acts 4:11-12, John 14:6.

II. Some things found “in Christ” Eph 1:3

- A. **REDEMPTION.** 1 Pet 1:18-19, Eph 2:13, 1:7. One must be “in Christ” to obtain redemption.
- B. **FORGIVENESS.** Col 1:14, Eph 1:7. One must be “in Christ” to obtain forgiveness.
- C. **NEW CREATION.** . 2 Cor 5:17. One must be “in Christ” to obtain new life.
- D. **SPIRITUAL LIFE.** John 1:3-4, 1 John 5:11-12. One must be “in Christ” to obtain this life.
- E. **RECONCILIATION.** 2 Cor 5:18-20. Jas 4:4, Eph 2:11-16. One must be “in Christ” to obtain reconciliation.
- F. **SALVATION.** 2 Tim 2:10. One must be “in Christ” to obtain salvation.
- G. **ONE BODY.** One is reconciled in “one body”. Eph 2:16, the church, 1:22-23. Therefore, to be in Christ for reconciliation is to be in the church.

III. **Redemption, Forgiveness, New Creation, Spiritual Life, Reconciliation, Salvation only in the church.**

- A. Only those in the church are saved. Eph 5:23,
- B. The church does not save, but Christ saves the church. All saved are in the church. Acts 2:47
- C. Those in the church are called Christians. Acts 11:26. Cannot be a Christian and not be in the church.

IV. Consider some “if”.

- A. *If people can be saved outside of the church—saved in the world.* The world is darkness. Col 1:13-14. Jesus would build His church. Matt 16:18-19. “church” means “called out”. Therefore, “called out” of the world. The saved will not be found outside of the church in the world of darkness.
- B. *If people can be saved outside of the church then Christ’s church is worthless.* Acts 20:28, Eph 5:25-27, Christ purchased the church. Those not in the church are not purchased.
- C. *If one can be saved outside of the church, the world can.* Jesus will save only His church. Eph 5:23, 1:22-23

V. **What is this church Jesus will save?** Body of Christ—“church of Christ”. Eph 5:23, 1 Cor 12:27, Rom 16:16.

VI. **If one can be saved in a church, not in the Bible, then any church is OK. Called “denominationalism”.**

- A. “Church of Christ” is not a denomination. It is the only church of the NT. A denomination is a sect, party, or class, separated by a peculiar name and creed. There is no record in scripture where the church of Christ was called a denomination. Denominationalism began about 1500 years after the church of Christ.

- B. "Aren't there Christians in all denominations?" There were no faithful Christians in any denomination in the first century—there were no denominations. Thousands of Christians in the NT were all members of only one church, the church that wore His name.
- C. One can be saved and not be in a denomination. Christ did not promise to save any denomination. Christians are complete in Christ. Col 2:9-10. Division from truth is wrong. 1 Cor 1:10-13. Jesus prayed for unity. John 17:20-21. All that makes unity possible is found only in the church of Christ. Eph 4:1-6
- D. Now, must a person be a member of Christ's church to be saved? 2 Tim 2:10, Acts 4:12,

VII. "Do you people in the church of Christ believe you are the only ones going to heaven?"

- A. How would you answer? (Consider attitudes behind this question, "Why are you asking?" "Who do you believe will go to heaven?" "Are you asking just to pick a fight?" "Do you want a Bible answer?" "Will you be willing to let God answer?")
 - 1. **You can answer**, "I believe the same way you do, that the only ones going to heaven are the ones Jesus said would go to heaven." "The only ones saved are the only ones Jesus said He would save." "The only ones saved will be in His church and He will save only His church."
 - 2. **You can continue**, "I will answer your question when you answer mine." "Where in the Bible did Jesus say He would save many different churches?" "Where in the Bible does anyone have a promise of heaven who is added to a church of which Jesus spoke nothing concerning salvation?" "Where in the Bible did Jesus or His apostles ever teach that one can be saved without being in the only church of which the Bible speaks?" "If you can honestly and truthfully answer these questions, I will not have to answer, 'Do you believe you are the only ones going to heaven?' You will have answered it yourself."
 - 3. The only ones going to heaven are the ones Jesus will save in His church, the church of Christ.

VIII. "That means a great many will be lost."

- A. No surprise. Matt 7:13-14. Noah and the ark.
- B. Some, "Don't you think God could have saved those outside of the ark?" and "Don't you think God can save a person who is outside the church?" No doubt about it. God can save anyone. BUT God's power will not overrule His will. Isa 46:13, Heb 12:22-23.
- C. God chose to save only those in the church. What God **can do** and **will do** are two different matters.

IX. Since salvation can only be found "in Christ", how can one get "into Christ"?

- A. One is baptized into Christ. Rom 6:3, Gal 3:27
- B. If one is baptized into Christ, and "in Christ" is salvation, then he is saved when he is baptized.
- C. Before one can be baptized into Christ he must come **unto** Christ.
 - 1. **Believe** in Christ, John 8:24
 - 2. **Repent** of a life of sin and turn the heart and life to Christ. 2 Pet 3:9
 - 3. **Confess** this newly acquired faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Rom 10:10
- D. These actions bring one "**unto**" Christ and salvation, but do not put one "**into**" Christ. You never read of one "believing into Christ", "repenting into Christ", "confessing into Christ," **But you do read of one being baptized "into Christ."**

CONCLUSION: In the judgment, the only ones saved will be those who have died "in Christ". Rev 14:13, 1Th 4:14. One cannot die in Christ unless he has been baptized "into Christ". Those who die who have not been baptized into Christ will not have eternal life, because they have not been added to that body Christ will save in judgment. 1 Cor 15:20-24