



# *Becoming a Christian*

The Kingdom  
The Church  
Characteristics of the  
Church  
Now that I'm a Christian

A brief discussion and illustrations

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# Becoming a Christian

There are two days in our lives that are most important, (1) the day that we believe and are baptized into Christ for remission of sins, and (2) the day that we leave this world. If we have lived a Godly life in Christ, we will land into Paradise, the good place in the Hadean world.

The hurdle to getting into Christ is *sin*. The follower must be purged of *sin* before he can enter into Christ. The key to do this is *blood*. Recall that, under the Old Covenant, the blood of animals was used to cover sins, and the blood of Christ in the New Covenant. His was the last and ultimate sacrifice under the Old Covenant and which became pivotal in the New. Being of divine nature, Christ's blood removes sin completely, whereas animal blood covered only temporarily until Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

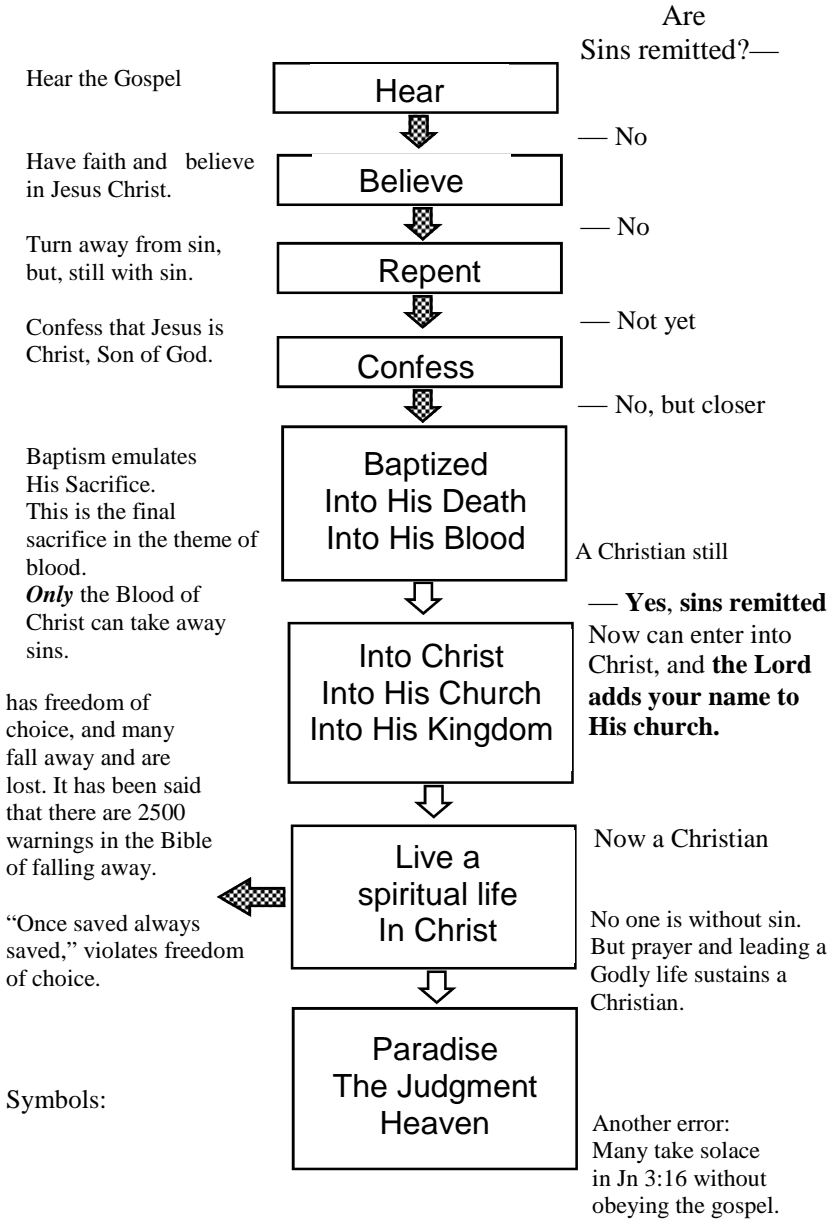
This explains why getting into Christ is contingent on proper baptism. Baptism is a burial in water to represent Christ's death and, hence, into His blood. This is the act that removes sin. This is the *only* way. To understand God's sacrificial system is to understand the importance of a burial with the death of His Son.

Being now *pure*, after baptism, God adds your name to the Church and to the Kingdom—you can't "join" or be voted in. Christ is head of His church, and he is also ruler of His kingdom. They are essentially one and the same—describing different aspects. They include all the Christians on earth and, at the same time, are divine, since they extend to Christ sitting in heaven at the right hand of God. As Jesus explained to Pilate, "my kingdom is not of this world," meaning that it is a spiritual kingdom.

On the next page is a diagram of the steps to becoming a Christian. All scripture is searched in order to define the overall context. We have to marvel at the simplicity in God's plan to imitate Christ's death.

Then, next is a diagram showing how a change in God's plan does not make a Christian! If man changes the rules, then the result is invalid. "Just believing in Jesus or thinking about Him," for instance, does not accomplish the sacrificial act of a burial with Christ. In the beginning there was strict adherence but, over the centuries, error crept in.

# Becoming a Christian



With sin     
 Without sin

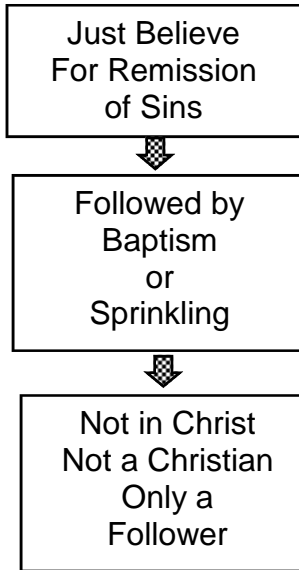
Herbert L Peterson

**Becoming a Christian**

**Denominational ways**

**Missing the mark**

A popular teaching—  
Just believe on the  
Lord Jesus Christ to  
be saved.  
But what does the  
Bible say? See  
preceding illustration.



Into His Sacrifice?

—————  
This doesn't  
involve His  
Sacrifice.  
—No

For some other  
reason than  
remission of sins.

— No, still with  
sin.

Not a Christian—  
A follower

**Why? Why is one not really into Christ?**

Because one must, first, have sins washed away to enter Christ. And, it takes the blood of Christ to take away sins. Therefore one must be buried into Christ to get to His Blood, which is the *only* thing that can take away sins. At that very moment sins are taken away. Not before, not after, but at that very moment. Ro 6:4. Jesus' last command, before he went into heaven, was to go and "baptize for remission of sins." Also Peter, at Pentecost, preached baptism for remission of sins. So, a burial in baptism for some other reason is not valid. But, an easy change in procedure will make all the difference in the world. Why? A soul, by proper baptism, goes into Paradise, rather than into Tartarus, the bad place. Also, sprinkling or pouring of water is not a semblance of a burial.

# Becoming a Christian

The following are a few of the references for the steps in becoming a Christian:

## **Hear**

Ro 10:14            everyone should hear the Gospel

## **Believe**

Mk 16:16            must believe, else condemned to die

Jn 8:24              believe, else will die in sins

## **Repent**

Lu 13:3,5            “except ye repent . . . all will perish”

Acts 2:38            “repent and be baptized”

Acts 17:38            commanded that all repent

## **Confess**

Ro 10:9,10            confess Jesus as Lord

Mt 10:32,33            confess Christ (Lu 12:8)

## **Baptism**

Acts 10:48            Gentiles also received baptism

Acts 2:38             sacrificial baptism for remission of sins

Mk 16:16             Christ’s last command

Ro 6:3,4              a burial(immersion) into His death, His blood

1 Pet 3:21            “water symbolizes baptism,” NIV

Acts 22:16            to wash away sins, in Saul’s conversion.

Gal 3:26,27            “clothed with Christ.” NIV

1 Co 12:13            “by one Spirit into one body (the church).” NIV

## **Obedience**

Mt 7:21                do the will of the Father to enter the kingdom

Acts 5:29             “must obey God rather than men”

Heb 5:8,9             eternal salvation to those who obey him

## **Examples of conversion and all were baptized:**

Acts 2:14-41          Peter on Pentecost; about 3000 souls saved

Acts 8:5-13            Philip in Samaria; Simon and others

Acts 8:35-39          Philip converts the Eunuch

Acts 9:17,18          Saul in Damascus

Acts 10:34-46        The Gentiles: Cornelius & his household

Acts 16:13            Paul at Philippi: Lydia & her household

Acts 16:32            The Philippian Jailer

By being baptized, all were saved by the sacrificial Blood of Christ.

# The Church

“I have been baptized in water. I am so happy. I am now in Christ. I know that I was baptized for the remission of my sins, according to Acts 2:38. I know, from Ro 6.4, that I was buried into Christ, and that way I got into his sacrificial blood, which took away my sins. I know, also, that I was added, by the Lord, to the ones being saved. Earlier I had been sprinkled, and later was taught to ‘just believe,’ and I would be saved, but now I know the truth.”

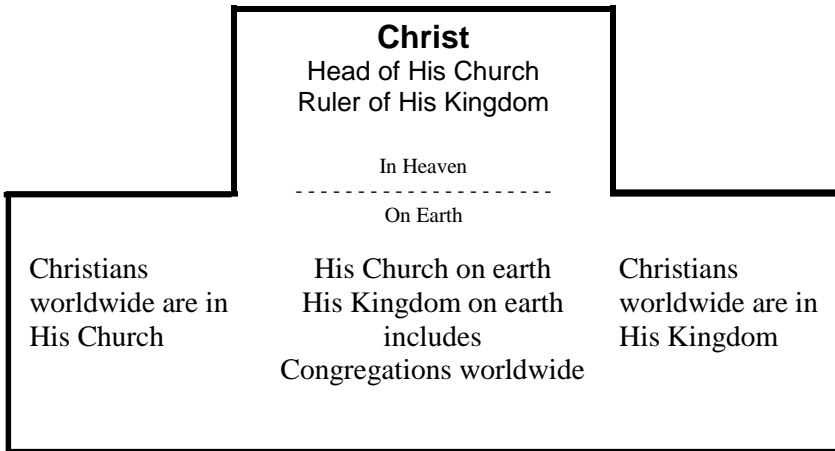
The above is not any particular person, but it really has happened, typically, to an untold number of people just that way. Perhaps, through a friend, a person has been converted to the truth. Pilate asked Jesus, at the trial, “What is truth!” Jesus had just told him that was why he came into the world—to bear witness to the truth.

The convert, above, may now have said, “What have I gotten myself into? The Lord has added me to others who call themselves Christians!” My friends, also, alluded to the church and the kingdom, but I must understand these better.”

So let’s look at some of the scriptures on these. But first, “the ones,” in Acts 2.47, is the translation from the original Greek, but the King James Version, right off, calls them, “the church.” Putting several scriptures together does develop the idea of the church, which is referred to in the Greek as, *ekklesia* (ekklesia), meaning simply a group or assembly. And here is an example of a common word taking on a loftier meaning in the N.T.—*church* meaning Christ’s *church*.

Peter said to Jesus, *You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*, and Jesus said it would be built on that foundation that Peter had just called Him; and Jesus called it *my church*, Mt 16:16-18,

He is the *cornerstone* of his spiritual church, which encompasses all his baptized followers—*Christians*. They were called *Christians*, first, at Antioch. Acts 11:26.



These are divine institutions planned before Christ came to earth. God gave to Jesus all authority and power over them and the judgment and, at the end of time, Christ will turn the church and the kingdom back to the Father. I Jn 4:14; Eph 1:22; Jn 5:22; 1 Co 15.24. These are essentially the same, encompassing the same members.

Since these are divine institutions, they must be kept *pure* and unchanged, following all rules and pattern found in God’s Word.

As shown above, Christ’s church and his kingdom are spiritual and extend to earth, and all His Christians are in both—His church and kingdom. Early on, the disciples were confused because they were looking for an earthly kingdom. Jesus told Pilate that my kingdom is not of this world and he was here to witness the truth.

The church was called by several descriptive names: Christ is the Head, Col 1:18; the church is His Body, Eph 1:23; church of the first born, Heb 12:23.

Members were called Christians, disciples, saints, brethren, believers, members, children of God. “The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.” Acts 11:26.

Local groups, or churches, were called: Church of the first born; church of Christ; church of the Lord; and church of God.

Sometimes, now, the *building* is called the church, instead, the *church* meets in the church building,

It is *Christ’s* church. Therefore, *Christ* should appear in the church name. Unfortunately many use other names unrelated to Christ.

# Characteristics of the Church

## **Organization of the N.T. church**

Each of the churches were separate and independent.

Elders in each church, Acts 20:17. The elders governed the body.

Deacons appointed to assist in the work. Phil 1:1

Members—believers who had been baptized into Christ.

Congregational names: Churches of Christ, Ro 10:16; church of the first-born, Heb 12:23; church of the Lord, Acts 20:28

Meet on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, to remember Christ's resurrection. Jn 20:1,8; Lu 24:1,7. The church was established and the Holy Spirit fell with power on that day;. Acts 2.1-4.

Unity: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Eph 4:4,5; I Co 1:10.

## **Elements of worship patterned after the N.T. church**

*Lord's Supper* on the first day of the week to remember the Lord's Death in the remembrance of the body and the blood. Acts 20:7.

*Prayer.* I Thes 5:17; I Co 14:15.

*Singing.* a cappella. Col 3:16; Eph 5:19; 1 Co 14:15.

*Teaching.* Commanded. Mt 28:19-20; Col 4:2

*Preaching.* Acts 2:14-40; Ro 10.14.

*Giving.* As prospered. 2 Co 9:6-8.

*Fellowship.* Acs 2.42.

*Attendance.* Do not neglect the assembly of the saints, Heb 10:25.

## **Errors.**

Over the centuries, errors have crept in, even beginning in the first century.

The **Lord's Supper** is most fundamental, but has been changed from not observing for periods of time, or changing the method of observance.

**Instrumental music**, which was never mentioned or authorized in the N.T., has been added centuries later, beginning with the Catholic church and, later, picked up by the denominations. Each of the **early churches were independent**, being governed by elders. Now, a great hierarchy of control has been developed, and linking congregations together.

**Baptism**, the most fundamental element associated with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and contingent on becoming a Christian, has been reduced to a mere formality or not at all. From time to time, efforts have been made to **restore N. T. Christianity** by the clarion call, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak, and where the Bible is silent, we are silent." And, to look at the scriptures to find a *command*, an *example*, or a necessary *inference*. This approach has been more powerful than efforts at reformation—since not all offending elements are removed. In the beginning it was "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."



# Now that I'm a Christian

## Continuing on into life

Now, after baptism into Christ and being added by the Lord into His church and kingdom, comes the pleasure and task of living in Christ.

The world is all about us, and we have to say, *no* to so many things. By thinking positively, we can enjoy the uplift we get from Him through following His commands and teaching and prayer.

### **A Christian will grow spiritually**

Study God's word, and become a teacher	2 Tim 2:15.
Add Christian graces	2 Pet 1:5.
Grow in grace and knowledge	2 Pet 3:18.
Created unto good works	Eph 2:10.
Keep unspotted from the world	Jas 1:27.
Fervent prayer life. All have sinned . . .	Ro 3:23.
but the prayers of a righteous man availeth much	Jas 5:16.
Look forward to heaven	Lu 10:20; Rev 2:10.
Faith and works recommended	Jas 1.14-26.
Jesus commanded, "Love one another"	Jn 13:34

### **Not do**

Forsake the assembly of the saints	Heb 10:25
Swear	Jas 5:12.
Steal	Eph 4:28.
Live after the flesh	Gal 5:19,20.
Neglect salvation	Heb 2:1-4.

See Concordance for more items

### **Beware of falling away**

It has been found that there are more than 2500 warnings in the Scriptures about apostasy and falling away, such as "take heed," "exhort." Guy N. Woods. N.T. Commentary on James. p64.

*A glorious award awaits for those steadfast in the faith.*

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The convert may now be facing a dilemma of existing church error. He/she may need to study the situation carefully and conscientiously. He may feel the need to leave his present denomination, and search about for a group that enjoys the simple elements following the New Testament pattern. In the past, some have sought out others to form their own congregation, using a New Testament name to indicate it belongs to Christ. The church belongs to Christ and, thus, needs to be kept as pure as possible.

## **Postscript**

How many of you have followed the story of the blood and are baptized for remission of sins and are now Christians? The biblical facts are before you. If not, how many of you, faced with these facts, are ready to change, or grasp at the opportunity to better your spiritual future?

We eagerly grasp opportunities to change to get a better job. But, does it work that way in religion? We seem to be influenced more by present tradition--which are changes to the original plan engendered by the mind of man.

Is your faith in Christ strong enough to cause you to get up and really change? I leave this with you.

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest..” Mt 11.28.

Jesus said, “. . . I am the way, and the truth, and the life. . .”  
Jn 14:6.

Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” Jn 14.15.

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