

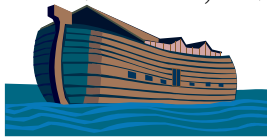
WILL ONLY MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BE SAVED?

by Douglas W. Hill

*"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
(Rom. 10:17).*

NOAH'S ARK

Noah was told to build an ark of Gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). He was given specific instructions on how to build the ark, one door, one window, 3 floors (6:15-16). Noah worked for 120 years building the ark just like God directed (Gen. 6:3, 22) Hebrews 11:7 says of Noah, "By faith Noah... prepared an ark".



Can you imagine the people of the world watching Noah, day after day, chopping tree after tree, forming plank after plank, framing this rather large boat for a world wide flood? I have no doubt that as Noah worked some where curious. And as Noah work he preached to those around him about the need to be righteous (2 Pet. 2:5).

It is not hard to see people laughing at Noah's grandiose efforts. "Old Noah has gone mad!" "He thinks the WHOLE world is going to be flooded!" "Look at the HUGE boat he is building!" "Hey Noah, don't you know I've got a boat too! And it floats pretty well!" "Noah thinks he has a monopoly on floating

boats!" On and on it could go. But in the end, we know that only one boat floated in the flood. Only those souls inside the ark that was authorized by the Word of God & prepared by faith survived (Gen. 7:23; Heb. 11:7).

Let us ask ourselves the question: Did Noah think only those in his boat would be saved? Did he think, "No other boat would survive the coming flood"? If he did, would it have been arrogant of him to think so? *Since God had only said to build one boat that would survive the flood, Noah could only correctly conclude that one boat would survive the flood.* But consider this: If Noah didn't believe God, would that mean no flood was coming? No. And would he have been saved by getting into another boat when the flood came? No. The only thing that would have changed would have been that Noah joined those who died that day.

CHRIST'S CHURCH

Today the question is asked, "Do you believe only members of the church of Christ will be saved?", "Do you believe you are the only ones going to heaven?", or "Don't you believe there are saved ones in all the denominations?" This is an emotionally charged question, because people view the answer as a possible threat to their own salvation.

With all the different religions & churches, there are naturally differing views on salvation. Some have decided to "agree to disagree" over the matter - and effectively pretend that such differences do not matter. But doesn't it? Can we be saved by all the myriad of different ways offered by denominations? And is it true that what church you belong to doesn't

matter? Can we really "Join church the church of our choice" and be pleasing to God? We know what mankind says about this, but what does God say about all this?

Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Notice two things: ownership is identified with Christ & the church is described in the singular, not plural. Jesus did not intend to build many different churches. He intended to build His own church. Furthermore, Jesus prayed that all His followers would be "one" as He & the Father are one (John 17:20-21). Are the Father & Son divided in doctrine? Do they hold conflicting views on what to do to be saved? Do they both own & direct separate churches?

Division & confusion is not authored by God (1 Cor. 14:33). There is perfect harmony & unity between the Father & Son. The Son speaks only what the Father has authorized Him to speak (John 5:19-24, 30; 12:49). Likewise, we see the apostles telling Christians to imitate this pattern. Paul told the Corinthians to "speak the same thing" (1 Cor. 1:10), rather than different & conflicting things. Neither Jesus nor His apostles approved of division & doctrinal differences (Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Jn 9-11).

Furthermore, the Lord said through Paul that there is "one body" (Eph. 4:4). This one body is described as "the church" (Eph. 1:22-23). Ephesians 5:23 even says, "Christ is the head of the church, being Himself the Savior of the body." Notice "the church" and "the body". These are not plural, as in many different & divided ones. These passages are emphasizing the united & singular nature of Christ's church. Jesus is the

head (the authority) of His church. He saves His own body.

It is also written that "all spiritual blessings" are "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Not one single spiritual blessing is found outside of Him. Thus, when He says that the church is "His body" (Eph. 1:22-23), we can easily see the need to be in His church. He is the Savior of His body / church (Eph. 5:25-27; Acts 20:28). There is not one assurance in Scripture that He will save anyone in any other body or church than His own.

Now consider this. If Jesus loved it enough to shed His blood for it, calls it His, is its only head - how can we think that any other church will be acceptable to Him? Just like with Noah when only one ark was authorized by God, only one church is authorized today by Christ.

While this is unsettling for many to consider, it is what the Bible teaches. And are we saying that all people in denominations are all terrible people? No. What we are saying is, regardless of one's intentions or upbringing, not one denomination was built by the Son of God. Not one denomination was established & purchased by His blood. Jesus is not the head of any denomination or group of denominations. He has His own church *and we can all be in it together.*

This is why faithful members of "the church of Christ" refuse to form or be part of any denomination. We do not want to add to the religious confusion & division existing today. Nor do we want to alter what we find in the New Testament. What right do we have to tell Christ how to organize His body? When the highest earthly organization we see in

the Bible is a local "flock" with its own elders (1 Pet. 5:1-3), who are we to "improve" upon what God has given? Are we not to walk by faith in Him (2 Cor. 5:7)?

Furthermore, we worship "in spirit & in truth" (John 4:24). This means we do so with our whole heart in the manner that is revealed in God's word. We do not add to or take away from the examples & commands we read of in the N.T. We read of singing one to another (Eph. 5:19), praying, studying together, "fellowship" in supporting the gospel financially, and the "breaking of bread" in memory of Christ's death (Acts 2:42; 20:7). If God wanted something more or something different, He would have said so. But who are we to presume to know anything beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6)?

Also, Jesus has revealed what He wants people to do to become members of His church, the body which He saves. In Acts 2, *believers* were told to *repent & be baptized for the remission of their sins* (Acts 2:38). It is written that those who did this were "added unto them" (2:41). Them who? "And the Lord added **to the church** daily such as should be **saved.**" (2:47 KJV). When people in obedience of faith were baptized, then the Lord added them **to the church** as He **saved** them.

Based upon these points, we see that Jesus saves, not the church. But the church is the saved. Now, if someone follows a different method of being saved, does Jesus save them? Does He add them to His church? No. Jesus warned against making void the word of God by the traditions of men (Mt. 15:6). When men do something other than what God says, & expect to receive spiritual blessing anyway, they are described as "blind" (Mt. 15:14). It is written, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (Mt. 15:13). If it is not built by God, it will not survive the judgment day.

Just like in Noah's day, we have a decision to make. We can be like Noah, trusting God enough to do as He says; or we can strike out on our own & think that our boat will float, that judgment won't come, etc. But when judgment comes, if we are not truly in Christ then we will be completely unprepared.

We have no hope outside of Christ. His way is not our way, His thoughts are not our thoughts (Is. 55:8-9). The essential element in saving faith is the decision to yield ourselves completely to His will. If we are not obeying Him, it is evidence that we have not done so.

Why not yield yourself to Him today? Deliver your whole being to Him, request His grace & mercy by submitting to the terms & conditions He has commanded (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:38).

If you would like to obey the gospel or if you have further questions (on this or another topic) please contact us. We are here to serve, by speaking the Truth in love (Eph. 4:15).



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**"Christ is the head of the church:
and he is the saviour of the body."
(Eph. 5:23)**