



## How I Became a Member of the Church of Christ

Brownsburg Church of Christ

by Edwin Crozier

July 7, 2013

AM Assembly



### Introduction:

In **Matthew 16:18** Jesus says, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (ESV). Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected in order to establish a church, a collection of people, who belong to Him. In a recent lesson, I explained why I want to be part of this group. I am a sinner and I know that Jesus shed His blood to purchase and redeem this group of people, making them perfect, spotless, blameless, beyond reproach. Salvation can only be found in Jesus Christ and in this group of people that belong to Him. Therefore, I have no desire to be part of a church that belongs to or was started by some man. I don’t want to be part of a church that is run by men. I long to be part of the church that belongs to Jesus, Christ’s church, the church that is of Christ. I hope you long to be part of that group as well. But that leaves us with a question. How did I become a member of the church of Christ? How can you become a member?

### Discussion:

#### I. If it is Christ’s church...

- A. Remember as we said last week what I’m talking about when I refer to the church of Christ. I am not referring to this particular congregation. Neither am I talking about an association of congregations that all use the name “Church of Christ.” Neither am I talking about a denomination called “The Church of Christ.” I am not talking about being part of a local church that has a sign that reads “church of Christ.” I’m talking about the universal body of believers who belong to Jesus Christ no matter what local congregation they attend.
- B. But there is something implicit in understanding this. Look again at **Matthew 16:18**. Whose church are we talking about? We are talking about Christ’s church. This is not my church, not your church, not his church, not her church. It is not the elder’s church, not the preacher’s church, not the pastor’s church, not the deacon’s church, not the Pope’s church, not the counsel’s church. This is Christ’s church. If we start there, that should assure us that how we become a member of that church relies on one person—Jesus Christ. It is His church. He gets to decide who is a member. He gets to decide how they become members. He gets to make the determination and we don’t. We don’t get to make up entry requirements. We don’t get to change membership procedures. We don’t get to establish initiation rites. Only Jesus, by authority of the Father, gets to set that down.
- C. It stands to reason, if we want to be part of Christ’s church, we have to learn His way for entry.

#### II. Christ’s is a church I can’t join.

- A. I know this is shocking, but in reality, I can’t just go join the church of Christ. I didn’t submit an application and then get accepted. I didn’t submit a list of references and jump through hoops of entry requirements. I didn’t prove I was good enough to be accepted into membership. I didn’t file a petition to be accepted into and join the membership of Christ’s church. The fact is the Bible demonstrates that membership in Christ’s church is wholly up to God.
- B. In **Acts 2:41, 47**, we learn that membership is completely up to God. People don’t join Christ’s church, they are added by God. God decides who gets to be a member and He does the work to get people into the church. In fact, notice **I Corinthians 3:5-6**. For all the work of men that God uses, who actually causes the growth? Not the men. Only God. God causes the growth. God adds people to His Son’s church.
- C. We don’t go join Christ’s church like joining a Toastmaster’s club. We don’t go meet some requirements, fill out some paperwork, pay some dues, and then join. Rather, we can only be members of Christ’s church by being added to it by God. There is no other way.

#### III. Jesus did the hard work of getting us into His church.

- A. The root problem for all of us is that we are sinners, separated from God, and without hope (**Ephesians 2:12**). But notice what Paul goes on to explain in **Ephesians 2:13-22**. First, remember that church is the body of Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 1:22-23**).
- B. Notice what Jesus has done to bring folks, whether Jews or Gentiles, into His one body. We are brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ. It is not our blood, sweat, and tears that brings us close to God; the blood of Jesus does that. We do not draw near to God by making peace with Him. We draw near to God because of the

peace that Jesus has made for us. We did not break down the walls of separation. Jesus did. We did not reconcile ourselves with God and therefore gain membership in the body. Rather, Jesus, through His body on the cross, paved the way for reconciliation which brings us into His one body. It is in Jesus that we are in the one body. It is in Jesus that the one body, the one church, is built up. It is in Jesus that we are built on Him as our cornerstone and on the revelation given through the apostles and prophets as our foundation.

- C. Certainly, in a few moments we will talk about some things we must do if we want to be added by God into the church that belongs to Jesus Christ. But we must not forget that nothing we do would remotely matter if Jesus hadn't done the hard work that allows us access to the grace of God and to His church.

#### IV. When does God add us to His church?

- A. Let's take stock of what we have discovered so far. It's Christ's church, He gets to decide who is a member. We can't join His church, but God adds us. He does it based on the work that Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross. However, we clearly see from Scripture that not everyone is just universally added to the church. Some are added and others aren't. That leaves us with these final questions. Who is added to the church? When are they added?

#### B. Who is added to the church?

1. In **Acts 11:24**, Luke recorded that "a great many people were added to the Lord." If we are in the Lord, we are in His church. Here we see a picture of people being added to the Lord. Who was it? A few verses earlier we see a somewhat parallel statement that gives us some insight. **Acts 11:21** says, "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord" (ESV). Who is added to the Lord? Those who believe the Lord, turning to Him.
2. This isn't surprising because if we had been reading through **Acts** and got to this passage, we would have already read **Acts 5:14**, "And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women" (ESV). Who is added to the Lord? Believers.
3. Again, this doesn't shock us because we know **Romans 5:2** which explains that it is by faith we gain access to the grace of the Lord.

#### C. When are believers added?

1. We might be tempted to think that if believers are added to Christ's church that at the moment of belief, someone will be added. However, this is not the case. After all, **James 2:19** explains that even the demons believe, but instead of being added to the Lord and His church, they shudder in fear.
2. **James 2:14-26** explains that it is not just any kind of faith that saves us. Rather, it is a working faith. The only faith that actually works is a faith that actually works. Thus, unless and until our faith actually works, it doesn't grant us access to the grace of the Lord that adds us to His church.
3. This takes us full circle back to **Acts 2:41, 47**. We learned in these verses that we can't join Christ's church but must be added by God. Notice in **Acts 2:37-38** that the crowd had discovered that they were sinners. Not just any sinners, but grand sinners who had crucified the anointed of God. They cried out, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter had an answer, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (ESV). Then in **Acts 2:41**, the text says, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (ESV).
4. When does God add believers to His Son's church? When their belief is consummated in the work of baptism for the remission of sins. This corresponds with **Colossians 2:9-15**. In baptism, God circumcises the deadness of our flesh away from us. He makes us alive together with Christ. He cancels the record of debt that stands against us. He forgives us our trespasses. He triumphs over our enemies. As **1 Peter 3:21** says, baptism saves us. It is the saved that are added (cf. **Acts 2:47**). When does God add believers to His Son's church? When they are baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins (cf. **Galatians 3:27-29**).

#### Conclusion:

Sadly, because of the numerous divisions and complicated denominational expressions of "Christianity" that have sprung up over the past 2000 years, this simple message has often been lost. Some suggest we are brought into Christ's church by a momentary belief. Others by a sinner's prayer. Some suggest we must get whipped up into a spiritual frenzy and speak in tongues. Other says we are born into it. But you have seen what Jesus says in His Word about being added to His church. He died to reconcile us and bring us into His body. Do you believe that? Why not confess that faith, turning away from your own path of sin and destruction, surrendering to Jesus Christ in baptism for the remission of sins. In that consummated working of faith, God will add you to His Son's church. Do you want to be a member of this blood-bought bride of Jesus? Why not let God add you today?