

God's Plan of Salvation

Step 1: Recognize Your Condition

You must understand and recognize that you are lost without Jesus Christ no matter who you are and no matter what your background is. The Bible tells us that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Before you can be saved, you must understand that you are lost and that the only way to be saved is by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:8) Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Step 2: Have Faith in God

You must have faith in God because "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6) But neither belief alone nor faith alone is sufficient to save. (James 2:19; James 2:24; Matthew 7:21)

Step 3: Repent of Your Sins

You must repent of your sins. (Acts 3:19) But repentance alone is not enough. The so-called "Sinner's Prayer" that you hear so much about today from denominational preachers does not appear anywhere in the Bible. Indeed, nowhere in the Bible was anyone ever told to pray the "Sinner's Prayer" to be saved. By contrast, there are numerous examples showing that prayer alone does not save. Saul, for example, prayed following his meeting with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:11), but Saul was still in his sins when Ananias met him three days later (Acts 22:16). Cornelius prayed to God always, and yet there was something else he needed to do to be saved (Acts 10:2, 6, 33, 48). If prayer alone did not save Saul or Cornelius, it will not save you either. You must obey the gospel.

Step 4: Confess That Jesus Christ is the Son of God

You must confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (Romans 10:9-10) Note that you do NOT need to make Jesus "Lord of your life." Why? Because Jesus is already Lord of your life whether or not you have obeyed his gospel. Indeed, we obey him, not to make him Lord, but because he already is Lord. (Acts 2:36) Also, no one in the Bible was ever told to just "accept Jesus as your personal savior." We must confess that Jesus is the Son of God, but, as with faith and repentance, confession alone does not save. (Matthew 7:21)

Step 5: Be Baptized for the Remission of Your Sins

Having believed, repented, and confessed that Jesus is the Son of God, you must be baptized for the remission of your sins. (Acts 2:38) It is at this point (and not before) that your sins are forgiven. (Acts 22:16) It is impossible to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ without teaching the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation. (Acts 8:35-36; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21) Anyone who responds to the question in Acts 2:37 with an answer that contradicts Acts 2:38 is NOT proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Step 6: Be Faithful Unto Death

Once you are saved, God adds you to his church and writes your name in the Book of Life. (Acts 2:47; Philippians 4:3) To continue in God's grace, you must continue to serve God faithfully until death. Unless they remain faithful, those who are in God's grace will fall from grace, and those whose names are in the Book of Life will have their names blotted out of that book. (Revelation 2:10; Revelation 3:5; Galatians 5:4)

What is the church of Christ?

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised to build a church. In Acts 2:47, Luke tells us that people were being added to that church. Thus, we can conclude that Jesus built His church sometime between His promise in Matthew 16 and Luke's statement in Acts 2. Indeed, a closer study of the events in Acts 2 reveals that the Lord's church was established on that first day of Pentecost following the Lord's resurrection when Peter preached the first gospel sermon. That church is the church of Christ.

A common misconception about the church of Christ is that "The Church of Christ" is its *name*. It is not. The "church of Christ" is its description. The church of Christ is the church that belongs to Christ, that was established by Christ, that was built by Christ, and that was bought by Christ. It is not our church; it is His church, the Lord's church. We are not voted into the church by men, and we do not join a church the way some might join a country club. Instead, God adds us to His church when we obey His gospel.

Are those in the church of Christ the only people who are going to be saved? Of course they are! God adds people to His church when they are saved. If you are not in the Lord's church, then you are not saved. If you are saved, then you are in the Lord's church. To be saved outside of the church of Christ is to be saved outside of the body of Christ – and that can never happen. Jesus is not just *a* way to the Father; he is *the* way to the Father. As Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Thus, the real question is not what is the church of Christ, but is rather how do you become a part of the church of Christ? That question was asked in the first century as it is asked today, and the answer remains the same. We are saved and added to the Lord's church when we obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like the Apostle Paul, we are saved when our sins are washed away at our baptism.

There is one church of Christ. If you are a member of something else or something more or something less, then you are not serving God according to His plan or according to His will. He wants you to be a Christian and only a Christian, wearing only the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the head and the savior of the church, His body.