

# HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

**How to Become a**



**Christian**

## What Is Faith?

The Bible says that without faith we can't please God and that the goal of our faith is salvation. God wants us to have living faith so we can grow in our relationship with Him. **So what is faith, and how do we receive it and grow in it?**

**Acts 8** tells the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, a high official under Queen Candace, who was confused by what he was reading in the book of Isaiah. He believed the Bible and strove to follow God's way, but he didn't yet understand about Jesus Christ. God sent Philip to explain more of God's truth to him and to help him take the next steps in his relationship with God.

After reading the Messianic prophecy in **Isaiah 53:7-8**, the Ethiopian official asked Philip, **"I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?"** **"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God'"** (Acts 8:34-37).

The Ethiopian eunuch demonstrated his belief—his faith—in our Saviour Jesus Christ and was ready for the next step in his growing relationship with God.

## What Is Faith?

Faith is an essential part of our relationship with God. It is a prerequisite to beginning the conversion process, which is a necessary step on the road to salvation and eternal life.

**'Without faith we can't please God'** (Hebrews 11:6), essentially because if we don't believe in Him and believe Him, we won't really be trying to please Him!

In the New Testament, both faith and belief are generally translations of the Greek word **pistis**. People who live by faith as followers of Jesus Christ are called **"believers"** (Acts 5:14).

**"The main sense of the word 'faith' in the NT is that of trust or reliance... [Pistis] bears the sense not of faithfulness alone, but of the reliance and trust that is the basis of man's faithfulness, i.e., the faithfulness that expresses confidence in the faithfulness of God"** (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, 1982, article, "Faith").

## How does the Bible describe faith?

**Hebrews 11:1** **'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'**

Faith goes beyond what we can perceive with our physical senses, so it does not work by the rules of science. Faith allows us to believe that the invisible God can do what is physically impossible. In that sense, faith is built and grows on a spiritual plane, not a physical or scientific one.

But that doesn't mean observation, science and rational thinking aren't part of how we come to believe in our miraculous Creator God in the first place. In fact, there is no contradiction or conflict between godly faith and true science. After all, since God is the Creator of everything, science is the study of God's creation.

## Is our belief in God based on a rational foundation?

**Romans 1:20** **'For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...'**

**1 Thessalonians 5:21** **'Test all things; hold fast what is good.'**

God's way is rational, and He wants us to test it out and prove that it works. But there is more to faith than what we process in our rational brains. There is a spiritual and emotional component that is a gift from God and grows as our relationship with God grows.

## Who is the source of faith?

**Ephesians 2:8** **'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.'**

As we saw in the last lesson, our relationship with God starts with God.

He calls us and opens our minds to understanding and believing. That initial seed of faith is a gift of God and, as we will see in a future lesson, faith is also a fruit that comes through using God's Holy Spirit.

### What can we do if we don't have enough faith?

Mark 9:23-24 'Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Mark gives this poignant example of a father recognizing his lack of faith and asking for God's help. God is pleased when we recognize our own inadequacy and seek His strength and encouragement.

### How do you grow in faith?

Romans 10:17 'So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'

Hearing and studying the Word of God can help us see God's faithfulness in the past and His solid promises for the future.

### Is believing in God enough?

James 2:19 'You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!'

Hebrews 11:6 'But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.'

God wants us to believe in Him. God also wants us to believe what He says. He wants us to diligently seek Him, which is done through prayer, Bible study, meditation.

### What did Jesus Christ tell us to believe?

Mark 1:14-15 'Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Gospel means "good news," and the news about the return of Jesus Christ to set up God's ultimate Kingdom is the best news this troubled world can hear! When we believe the gospel, we will be motivated to share this good news (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

### What did Jesus Christ tell us to do?

John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

When we believe what God says, we should do what God says.

### What is dead faith?

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

James 2:20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?'

Just calling Jesus our Master isn't enough, and just saying we have faith isn't enough. Our growing belief in God will motivate us to strive to obey God—to do His will and obey His law.

### What is living faith?

James 2:17-18 'Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'

Real, living faith motivates our actions. There is no conflict between James and Paul, as some believe. Paul said we were "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

When we believe in God and believe God, what will we be motivated to do?

Matthew 3:8 'Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance..'

Romans 2:4 'Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?'

As we saw earlier in Mark 1:15, Jesus commanded us to repent and believe the gospel. God's goodness leads us to this next step in turning our lives toward God. And as John the Baptist mentioned, repentance also involves fruits, or changes in our lives.

### Repentance

The word "repent" in its various forms occurs more than 100 times in the Bible. This shows the great importance of repentance. Nearly every church requires repentance from sin of those who wish to be members. However, repentance is a greatly misunderstood command of God. It is also a very difficult command. Some have said it is the most difficult command in all the Bible.

### What is Repentance?

Sometimes the best way to learn the meaning of a word is first to look at what it is not before looking at what it is. Many people think repentance is just being sorry for one's sins. This is not what repentance is!

The apostle Paul wrote: "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

If one is sorry for the sins he has committed, it will cause him to repent of them. One Pentecost Day, the Jews who heard Peter preach Christ "were cut to the heart." This shows they were very sorry for their sin of crucifying Jesus, but their sorrow for sin was not repentance.

Peter still had to tell them to ". . .Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;..." (Acts 2:37, 38).

If repentance is not being sorry for one's sins, then what is repentance? According to all the teaching of the Bible, repentance is a change of one's mind toward sin. It is produced by godly sorrow for one's sins. The result of this change of mind toward sin will be a change of life.

A good example of what is involved in repentance is a parable that Jesus told: "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went" (Matthew 21:28,29).

The son disobeyed his father. When he regretted (was sorry) for his disobedience, he changed his mind about his decision. He then did what his father had asked him to do.

Repentance involves restitution. "Restitution" means that we will make right the things we have done wrong in so far as possible.

If one has murdered another person, he cannot restore that person back to life. He can, however, help the widow and children of the man he has killed. If one has stolen money from another person, when he repents, he must return the money he has stolen. John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees to "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8).

### Who Should Repent?

Those who are not Christians must repent of their sins in order to be saved. Jesus commanded that "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

Paul told the people of Athens that God "but now commands all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30).

On Pentecost Day, Peter told the Jews who heard the gospel and had cried out, "What shall we do?" to "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;..."(Acts 2:37, 38).

Christians who have sinned also need to repent. When Philip preached in Samaria, Simon, who had been a sorcerer, became a Christian. When he saw the apostles giving the gifts of the Holy Spirit by laying their hands on the Christians, he wanted to buy this power.

"But Peter said to him, Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:20-22).

### Why Should One Repent?

We have already learned that godly sorrow produces repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). In Jesus' parable of the two sons, we learned that the son who refused to obey his father regretted his decision. Therefore, he changed his mind and did his father's will. His regret (godly sorrow for his disobedience) caused him to repent and obey his father's command (Matthew 21:28, 29). One will repent if he is sorry for his sins.

One will also repent of his sins when he understands God's goodness toward him. Paul asked, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4)?

God loves us and sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10; Romans 5:6-8). God's goodness should make us want to repent of our sins against Him.

One will also repent of his sins because the Day of Judgment is coming. Paul told the idolaters in Athens: "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained, He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31).

Christ is now ruling from the right hand of God in Heaven, but one day He will come again to raise the dead and judge the whole world (Acts 1:9-11; John 5:28, 29). Everyone who is living and who has ever lived will be judged (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). We must repent of our sins so that we will not be condemned at the Judgment!

### When Should One Repent?

The Jews on Pentecost repented the same day they heard the gospel. They were then baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:37, 38, 41). Since one cannot be saved without repentance, then one should want to repent as soon as possible (Luke 13:3).

Life is short and uncertain (James 4:13-15). Death is certain and will come to each one of us sooner or later (Hebrews 9:27). We are going to be judged for our sins at the Last Day. Therefore, we should repent immediately!

The apostle Peter wrote: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

### Confess Jesus as Lord

We need to acknowledge our faith in Christ Jesus (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9+10). A person must confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God before he can become a Christian. This confession is necessary to salvation.

'That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation' (Romans 10:9,10).

If a person will not confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then he cannot become a Christian. In the book of Acts, we have an example of a man confessing Christ before being baptized. Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

'Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:35-37). After the eunuch made the confession, Philip baptized him. No one can become a Christian if he is not willing to confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

## CONFESSION AFTER BAPTISM

A person must confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God before becoming a Christian. He must also confess Jesus Christ to others after he becomes a Christian. It is the duty of every Christian to tell others about the salvation that Jesus Christ offers to man. Jesus said that if we tell others about Him He will tell God about us. But if we don't tell others, He will deny us to God.

**'Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 10:32,33).**

This confessing of Jesus Christ is to be done throughout the life of a Christian. Jesus Christ died so that all men might have the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins, however, depends upon men accepting and obeying Christ. **But can men accept and obey Christ if they don't know about Him? No!**

Christians then must tell others about Christ so that they may accept and obey Him. Then they will receive the forgiveness of their sins. Nothing should prevent Christians from telling others about Christ. Christ has commanded Christians to confess Him, and so Christians **"...ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).**

We have learned that we are to confess Christ to others by word of mouth. We are also to confess Him in another way. We are to confess Christ by the way we live. Christ lived a perfect life. We are to follow His example.

**'For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps' (1 Peter 2:21).**

People are watching Christians all the time. If a Christian does wrong, others know it. They then speak evil of Christianity. But if Christians follow Christ, they will do that which is right. People will then see that Christianity is good.

If a Christian tells others about Christ, but does not live right, then he speaks in vain. People will not listen to a Christian who tells them what to do but doesn't do it himself. A Christian must tell others about Christ and at the same time do what Christ tells him to do.

## CONFESSING OUR SINS

There are two ways we are to confess our sins. **First**, we are to confess our sins to one another. James says, **"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).**

It is not easy for a person to say that he has sinned. Yet the Bible commands that we do it. **Why are we to confess our sins to one another?** It is so that we can pray about those sins. Christians should be interested in helping one another. If one Christian has sinned, all other Christians should want to help him overcome that sin. They can do that by praying for him.

The **second** way we are to confess our sins is to God. **'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9).** If we confess our sins to God, He will forgive our sins. What a great promise!

## CONCLUSION

A person must confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God before he can become a Christian. After he becomes a Christian, he must confess Christ to others in two ways: **(1)** by word of mouth, and **(2)** by the kind of life that he lives.

After a person becomes a Christian, he will still commit sins. Christians are then to confess their sins to one another and to pray for one another so that they can overcome those sins. A Christian is also to confess to God his sins. God will then forgive him of his sins.

## Baptism

**What is baptism? Who should be baptized? What is the purpose of baptism?** Only God can give us the answers to these questions. God's answers are found in the Bible. Let us learn what the Bible teaches about baptism.

## WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

The Bible gives us certain requirements which we first must obey before we can be baptized. One must believe in Jesus Christ before he can be baptized. Jesus said: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

**How do we come to believe in Jesus?** It is by hearing the Word of God. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

One must repent of his sins before he can be baptized. The Bible says: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). Repentance must come before baptism.

Before one can be baptized, he must confess his faith in Christ. "... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9,10).

One must hear the Word of God, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of his sins, and confess his faith before he can be baptized into Christ.

A new-born baby or small child cannot be baptized. A baby cannot understand about Jesus. A baby cannot repent of sins when he has not done anything, either good or bad. A baby cannot confess his faith in Jesus. Since a baby cannot hear, believe, repent, or confess, he cannot be baptized.

In the Bible we learn that only people old enough to hear, believe, repent, and confess were ever baptized.

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:12).

## HOW SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

There are two ways by which churches baptize people today. One is by pouring or sprinkling water on the person's head. The other is by burying or immersing a person in water. **Which one is correct baptism?** The Bible gives the answer.

In the Bible baptism is called a burial. "...we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

If we want to bury a dead body, we will not sprinkle a little dirt on the head. We will cover the body completely. Baptism is a burial. Sprinkling water on the head of a person does not baptize him. He must be completely buried under the water.

"Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized" (John 3:23).

John chose a place to baptize where there was much water. Sprinkling requires only a little water. But a burial in water requires much water. Therefore, John did not baptize by sprinkling. He baptized by burying in water.

"So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:38,39).

When Philip baptized the eunuch, both of them went down into the water. After the baptism, both of them came up out of the water. To sprinkle a person, it is not necessary to go down into the water. To baptize a person by burying him in water, it is necessary to go down into it. Therefore, Philip baptized the eunuch by burial, not sprinkling.

**What is the proper way to baptize?** The Bible teaches it is by a burial in water. Therefore sprinkling is not true baptism.

## WHY BE BAPTIZED?

There are **four reasons** why we must be baptized: **First**, we must be baptized if we want to be saved. Jesus Himself said: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). The apostle Peter said: "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

**Second**, we must be baptized if we want to have our sins forgiven. The Bible says: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

**Third**, we must be baptized if we want to be in Christ. To be "in Christ" means "to be a Christian." The Bible says: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

**Fourth**, we must be baptized if we want to become a member of the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the church of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23). The Bible says: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..." (1 Corinthians 12:13).

### Counting the cost

Do you count the cost before you invest your time, money, and effort into long term commitment? Perhaps one of the great failings of man is the failure to learn the lesson that Jesus taught during his earthly sojourn.

Do you remember the passage in Luke where Jesus uses the concept of counting the cost before a person undertakes a project? Luke 14:28-33 'Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.'

There is a great lesson in the passage referred to that many people overlook in the process of life. The greatest and perhaps most important event that is overlooked as a person lives their life is, "How do I know that I will be successful in life? How will I know whether I have selected the right person for my mate? How can I be assured that I am rearing my children correctly? How will I know whether my life will really count for anything worthwhile?"

Indeed, I suspect many people ask themselves these questions as they leave childhood and began to understand the realities of living in the world. Yet, these questions and considerations of living life may be answered simply by listening to Jesus Christ in this passage.

Whenever we leave childhood we ought to "count the cost" of building a life with or without God in our lives. We will be wise to consider all of the facts that a healthy, prosperous, peaceful, and reverent life will benefit us if we commit our lives to serve the "one true God". Some of the promises offered by God for faithful Christian living is found in the Bible, please note the following:

1. Without God's Instruction we cannot direct our own steps.

Jeremiah 10:23 'LORD, I know that people's lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps.'

2. Christ will help us and share our problems and our joys.

Matthew 11:28-30 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

3. Jesus will mediate our prayer requests (i.e. act as our advocate to the Father).

1 Timothy 2:5-6 'For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.'

4. Finally after a lifetime of faithful service.

Revelation 2:10 'Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.'

Christ will welcome us into that eternal Heaven prepared for the Righteous.

Hebrews 9:27-28 'Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.'

1 Peter 1:3-9 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.'

### What is the church?

#### Origin of the Church

God is the originator of the church, according to His eternal purpose in Christ. 'according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.' Ephesians 3:11-12.

He foretold of the church in the Old Testament, indicating that He'd establish it during the reign of Rome. 'In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.' Micah 4:1-3

'Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. "After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and

the gold to pieces. “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.’ Daniel 2:31-45.

During the reign of Rome, the church began on Pentecost, a few days after Jesus ascended into heaven. ‘Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ Acts 1:6-8

‘When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.’ Acts 2:1-4

### The Church is the Called Out Body

The word "church" is translated from the Greek work ekklesia, denoting a called out body of people. God calls us out of the world of sin through the gospel. ‘He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ 2 Thessalonians 2:14. The church is composed of people who respond to God's call.

The word church is used in two ways. "Church" can be used in reference to all Christians, or a specific congregation. Jesus uses "church" both ways:

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promises to build His church, speaking of Christians everywhere who would respond to the gospel call. ‘And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.’

In Matthew 18:17, Jesus uses the word "church" regarding Christians in a local congregation. ‘If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.’

### Membership in the Church

On Pentecost, people asked Peter what they should do. He told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. ‘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.’ Acts 2:38.

The people who obeyed the gospel received the gift of the Holy Spirit --- they were saved, and added to the church by the Lord. ‘With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day’. Acts 2:40-41

Acts 2:47 ‘And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.’

They were baptized into the body of Christ by the Spirit. ‘For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free’. 1 Corinthians 12:13. They were born again, born of water and Spirit ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.’ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.’ John 3:3-5.

### The Church is God's Kingdom

The word kingdom denotes the domain of the king. God rules over the church; therefore, it is His kingdom. We must be born again to see the kingdom of God. ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.’ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.’ John 3:3-5.

We are born of water when we are baptized, and born of the Spirit when we are added to the church, at which time we become a new creature in Christ. **‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!’ 2 Corinthians 5:17.**

Since we believed the good news about the kingdom of God and were baptized, **‘But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.’ Acts 8:12,** we are members of God's kingdom.

### The Church is Christ's Kingdom

God put all things under Christ's feet, **‘And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.’ Ephesians 1:22-23.**

He is Lord of lords and King of kings, having all authority in heaven and on earth, **‘God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords’ 1 Timothy 6:15 ‘Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’ Matthew 28:18.** Therefore, He rules over the church (kingdom).

As Christians, God has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His Son, **‘For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.’ Colossians 1:13-14.** As members of Christ's kingdom, we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Later in this epistle, Paul tells us exactly when these things transpire: **"having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions’.** Colossians 2:12-13.

Therefore, we are added to the kingdom when we are baptized --- the time at which we are saved.

### The Church is Christ's Body

Paul tells us the church is the body of Christ, allegorically expressing our relationship to Christ as members of His body.

Paul says, **‘And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.’ Ephesians 1:22-23.**

Since Christ is the head of the body, the church must be subject to Him in everything **‘And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.’ Colossians 1:18**

**‘Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.’ Ephesians 5:24.** If our congregation isn't subject to Christ, we're not His church!

As head of the body, Jesus is also the Saviour of the church, **‘For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.’ Ephesians 5:23.** We must be members of His church to be saved. He is the author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him, **‘once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him’.** Hebrews 5:9. He is our Saviour if we obey.

### The Church is God's Household

Paul tells us the church is God's household, allegorically expressing our relationship to God as His children. Paul says, **‘I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth’.** 1 Timothy 3:14-15.

Just as Jesus is head of the body, He is over the house of God: **‘But Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory’.** Hebrews 3:6.

Since Jesus is God's Son, and we are also God's children, we are Christ's brethren. 'Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters'. Hebrews 2:11.

We are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. 'Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.' Romans 8:17.

### The Church is God's Temple

Paul tells us the church is God's temple, allegorically expressing our relationship to God as priests who render spiritual service to Him.

Paul says, 'What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'" 2 Corinthians 6:16.

And Paul writes to the Ephesians, saying of the church, '... Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit'. Ephesians 2:20-22.

As God's temple, we are responsible for conducting ourselves properly. Our bodies are members of Christ, 'Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!' 1 Corinthians 6:15.

We are one spirit with the Lord. 'But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.' 1 Corinthians 6:17.

We must glorify God in our body. 'Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.' 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. We are not our own; we've been bought with a price.

### The Church is the Bride of Christ

Paul tells us the church is Christ's bride, allegorically expressing our united relationship with Him, as a husband is united to His wife. Paul says, 'I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him'. 2 Corinthians 11:2.

We are united with Christ when we are baptized. 'Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.' Romans 6:3-5

'So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.' Romans 7:4, becoming one spirit with Him, baptized into His body by the Holy Spirit, 'But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.' 1 Corinthians 6:17 'For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.' 1 Corinthians 12:13.

Most importantly, we will live with Jesus in heaven, united with Him for eternity.

### Conclusion

The church is God's kingdom, Christ's kingdom, Christ's body, God's household, God's temple, and Christ's bride. There's no greater privilege than to be a Christian. But we also have responsibilities, as people upon whom God has bestowed so many blessings. Let's make sure we are doing our part, to be the church God ordained from eternity!

### Members responsibilities

The word "church" can refer to the church universal 'And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.' Matthew 16:18 'For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.' Ephesians 5:23, the whole body of baptized believers, or to a local body of Christians 'All the churches of Christ send greetings' Romans 16:16 'To the church of God in Corinth'. 1 Corinthians 1:2.

When you were baptized into Christ ‘Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.’ Romans 6:3-4, He added you to His church ‘Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.’ Acts 2:41 ‘And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.’ Acts 2:47.

This refers to the church universal, the body of all the saved who belong to Christ, ‘and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.’ Ephesians 2:16 ‘There is one body and one Spirit,’ Ephesians 4:4 ‘And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.’ Ephesians 1:22-23.

On the other hand, such expressions in Scripture as "the church of God which is at Corinth" 1 Corinthians 1:2 refer to a local church, a congregation of those who belong to the Lord in a particular locality who have banded together to work and worship collectively in those things God would have them to do.

The Christian, while added to the universal church by the Lord, joins himself to the local church like the apostle Paul did with the church in Jerusalem in Acts 9:26 ‘When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.’

Every Christian needs to be identified with a local church. When a child of God moves from one locality to another, he should seek out a faithful group of the Lord's people and identify with them in order to fulfil his share of the collective responsibilities the Lord has given him.

For, you see, the local church is the only collective functioning unit revealed in the New Testament. The church universal has no organization with which it can function. Nor are there any structural ties between local churches. Each local congregation is an independent, autonomous, i.e., self-governing, group.

God has designated that when there are qualified men to serve, each local church should be organized with elders, deacons and members Philippians 1:1. The qualifications for elders are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The deacons' qualifications are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Elders are to tend the church 1 Peter 5:2 and rule over it Hebrews 13:17 by exercising oversight 1 Peter 5:2, to watch out for the souls placed in their charge Hebrews 13:17, to admonish the unruly 1 Peter 5:1-2 and be an example to all 1 Peter 5:2.

Deacons are special servants who attend to those things the church needs and the elders direct them to accomplish. If there are no qualified men in a congregation who can serve in these offices, a local church may exist and function by using such an expedient as a business meeting -- a meeting of the men of the congregation which determines the course of action the church will follow in accomplishing the work of the Lord.

### The Christian's Responsibilities To Members Of The Church

As a member of the church the Christian is a part of the family of God, ‘you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.’ 1 Timothy 3:15.

Being a family member carries responsibilities. As a part of the universal church one has responsibilities to all Christians worldwide. Being a member of a local church, though, he sustains peculiar responsibilities to those who are his fellow-members in that local body. It is like being a part of the physical family.

When one is born he becomes a part of a large family with aunts, uncles, cousins, etc., to whom he has responsibilities. But he also is part of a nuclear family of mother, father, sisters and brothers to whom he has special moral and spiritual obligations over and above those he has to the rest of his relatives.

### Some Of The Christian's Responsibilities To Other Members Of The Church

Love ‘Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.’ 1 Peter 1:22

**Edify** ‘From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.’ Ephesians 4:16

**Encourage** ‘And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.’ Hebrews 10:23+24

**Teach and Admonish** ‘Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.’ Colossians 3:16

**Bear Burdens** ‘Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.’ Galatians 6:2

**Comfort** ‘Therefore encourage one another with these words’. 1 Thessalonians 4:18

**Forgive** ‘Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.’ Ephesians 4:32

**Work Together** ‘Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel’ Philippians 1:27

### Use your talent

Romans 12:6-8 “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

**Prophesying.** This means preaching. You don’t need a pulpit to preach, the bus stop is your pulpit. Your workplace is your pulpit, at the family table is your auditorium and your friends and family are your audience.

And notice that your prophesying in according with your faith, which basically means you can preach according to your ability and understanding of the Scriptures. Some people know a lot about the Bible, others don’t, but it doesn’t matter, just teach what you know.

**Serving.** I don’t know of one single member of this congregation who doesn’t serve in some manner. Yes we’ll all bring food to a fellowship meal but **who’s going to stay behind and wash the dishes?** Yes we’ll all dig in and help you do the garden but **who’s going to do the tedious job of removing the weeds?** Yes we’ll all help out with our special events but **who’s going to come in early and help greet any visitors?**

**Teaching.** This is much like the gift of preaching but without the pulpit. When you’re sharing the Gospel with others He will remind you of Scripture, so that you can be a more effective teacher.

**Encouragement.** Who encourages the encourager? We all need encouragement, **don’t we?** A simple phone call, text message, a visit or kind word all help make our Christian journey a little more bearable.

**Generosity.** Now please don’t think just about monetary giving, we can give in so many ways. We can give of our time, our energy, our ears, our council, our strength, our love and the Holy Spirit will help us give generously in all these areas.

**Leading diligently.** Now Paul doesn’t just have leading like the men each Lord’s Day do in mind here by leading by example. And we all should be doing that in our homes, in our workplaces, in the supermarket, wherever we find ourselves. We should be leading by example and showing the world that we are Christians.

**Showing mercy cheerfully.** Be like the Samaritan, Help those who have been or are being afflicted by others. He wants us to help the helpless, He wants us to feed the hungry and visit the sick.