

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Myths About The Church Of Christ

Over eight years ago, CNN host Nancy Grace had a guest on her show whose name was Tom Rukala. Mr. Rukala was identified as a Baptist pastor, who came on the show to speak about a crime involving a church of Christ minister's wife. In this particular interview Mr. Rukala identified the church of Christ as a "sect" and "a borderline cult."

There are many misconceptions about the church of Christ. Mr. Rukala is not the first person to ever identify the bride of Christ as a sect, or a "borderline cult" (Acts 24:5; 28:22). Just as the apostle Paul was identified as being a member of a "sect," Christians can expect that the church might be called a sect, or even a cult. And Christians would be right in the company of the apostle Paul – that's pretty good company!

While Nancy Grace and Tom Rukala were discussing some matters concerning the church of Christ there were some "myths" that were discussed. The church of Christ was identified as a denomination. The common myth, "they think they're the only ones going to heaven," was brought up in the interview. The requirement of baptism by a church of Christ minister was another myth that was discussed. Another common myth is concerning the lack of music in the church.

Let's study some of these common myths and find out what the Bible says. The Bible is authoritative and is what will determine truth in regards to any religious subject.

Who Is Going To Heaven?

Perhaps the most common myth that has been believed about the church of Christ is that the church of Christ teaches they are the only ones going to heaven. You have probably even heard the joke about St. Peter giving a tour of heaven and instructing his tour group to be quiet when they pass the room with all of the church of Christ members in it, since they think they are the only ones up there. As widespread as this myth is, it must be

true...right? This writer has never heard any member of the church of Christ claim that we were the only ones going to heaven. However, a question that we should all ask ourselves, and deserving of a Scriptural answer is, who will go to heaven?

Let's see what the Scriptures teach. Jesus promised that only the righteous would have entrance to life everlasting (Matthew 25:46). Believers will have inheritance to eternal life (John 3:15,16). Those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21). Those who obey God will be given eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9). We can conclude from these passages that those who will be granted an everlasting home in heaven will be those who are obedient to God's will. They are believers and live a life of righteousness in service unto the Lord.

Hell is a place that is reserved for the devil and those who are wicked. For those who do not obey the gospel of the Lord, they will be in torment for eternity (2 Thessalonians 1:8-10). Therefore, the ones who will dwell with God in heaven are those who have obeyed the gospel and are saved. Jesus said those who would believe and be baptized would be saved (Mark 16:16). Then on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, those who were baptized were saved, and added to the church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

Jesus of Nazareth gave His life to save us from our sins, so that we may have the hope of eternal life (Titus 2:13, 14; John 3:16). Christ gave His life to purchase the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). The saved were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). Jesus is the Savior of the body, the church (Ephesians 5:23; 1:22, 23). The saved must be part of the Lord's church to go to heaven.

“You Don’t Like Music!”

Another common (and mistaken) myth concerning the church of Christ, is in regard to music in worship. Many believe that the church of Christ does not like music! It is widely known that you will not find a piano, guitar, or any other musical instrument in the worship assembly of most churches of Christ. Why is that? Do members of the church of Christ just not like instruments?

The reason that we do not use instrumental music in our assembly is because the Bible does not command the use of instruments. The Bible does command us to “sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Many might claim, “well, the Bible doesn’t say not to use instruments ... therefore, we may use a piano.”

When God explicitly commands a specific action, that action will exclude any and all other actions that are contrary to His command. We need to be satisfied with God's commands. For example, Jesus taught the marriage union was between a man and a woman (Matthew 19:4, 5). He did not have to teach that marriage was not between two men, or two women. He taught what God intended for marriage to be. Thus, God has given the command to sing. This is His intention for worship in the church. If God wanted to have instruments of music in the worship of the New Testament church, then He would have commanded us to use them. He would not leave it to guesswork, or upon our own whims.

God did command instruments under the Old Testament system of worship. This is why Psalm 150 is filled with instruments of praise. God commanded the Levites to use instruments in the temple worship (2 Chronicles 29:25, 26). All of this reinforces that we must have a command from God Almighty! What God has said, we will do. We will not go beyond His commands; that is sin. God's silence in regard to instruments does not give approval to their use. God has commanded singing, therefore we are to sing (cf. Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). The reason that there is no piano, guitar, or any other instrument of music employed in the worship assembly is because God has not commanded us to use them. We must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Refuse Fables And Vain Babblings

The bride of Christ has always come under attack from unbelievers (Acts 24:5; 28:22). Many times it has been described as a cult, or a sect, that causes division. A great accusation came against the apostle Paul and the early Christians, that they were turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

The apostle Paul warned people from believing lies and deceitful teachings (1 Timothy 4:1-7). "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather to godliness," (1 Timothy 4:7). We must be perceptive. The Lord wants us to think soberly. Our goal should be to strive for godliness, refusing to accept the fables and myths of heretics.

The church of Christ is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). By the church, the manifold wisdom of God is manifest (Ephesians 3:10). The Lord's church is not built upon fables and myths. The church of Christ is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20).

Do not accept the myths and lies that exist. We will all be benefited if we do not accept those who are proud and create strife, seeking to disperse fables, rather than truth (1 Timothy 6:4, 5). Shouldn't we all seek the truth about the Lord's church? Avoid profane

babblings and myths (1 Timothy 6:20). Our Lord and Savior gave His life to purchase the church (Acts 20:28). When we slander His bride, we slander Him.

Is The Church Of Christ A Denomination?

Many people recognize that Christianity is divided into several different denominations with their own set of beliefs on certain issues. As an example, most Baptists require baptism as an immersion. Catholics accept sprinkling. Which group is right? Which is wrong? When someone is introduced to the church of Christ, many believe it is a denomination, just like the rest of them. However, the Scriptures do not teach that the churches of Christ are a denomination. Let's examine some of the characteristics of denominations and see if the church of Christ is a denomination:

1. An earthly head? In the church of Christ, there is no other head, pope, nor president that leads the church. "...Christ is the head of the church..." (Ephesians 5:23). Christ is honored and recognized as the only leader of the church.
2. An earthly headquarters? The headquarters of a denomination is where the head is located. Salt Lake City, Utah is the headquarters for the Mormons. Brooklyn, New York is the headquarters for the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Assembly of God headquarters is in Springfield, Missouri. Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God. That is the only headquarters that the churches of Christ have (Ephesians 6:9; Acts 2:30).
3. A governing body? In the church of Christ you will not find a general assembly, synod, or conventions, where church members will vote on church matters. There is only Christ and His law, which does not change according to popular opinion (Galatians 6:2).
4. A creed? There are no creed books that were written by men in the churches of Christ. The only creed is the word of God. Any manmade creed will contain either too much, or too little in comparison of the Bible. And if a creed says only what the Bible says, then it is not needed. Let us speak only as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11).

The church of Christ is different in organization, function, and operation than the denominations. We invite you to study this in greater detail.

"You Believe In Water Salvation..."

One accusation that is often hurled towards members of the church of Christ is that they believe in "water salvation," referring to immersion in water for the remission of sins. This

poses some interesting questions in relation to the subject of baptism and salvation. What or whom saves – a gracious God or the act of being baptized in water?

The Bible teaches that baptism saves (1 Peter 3:21). The act of being baptized in water is an essential act of faith that saves us from our sins. “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ...” (Acts 2:38). “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...” (1 Peter 3:21). “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized...” (Acts 10:47).

The Scriptures make quite plain that immersion in water is an act that is necessary for salvation. However, the Bible does NOT teach that it is the water that saves us from our sins. “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12). When we submit to Christ’s command to believe and be baptized (Mark 16:16), we are not trusting in the water. We are not expecting the water to work like magic to save us. When people believe in Christ, repent of their sins, and are baptized into Christ, they are trusting in God’s word! They are trusting that God will forgive us. They trust the very words of Christ, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mark 16:16). Those who are baptized into Christ are baptized into His body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The faith is in God’s grace and promise to save us from our sins when we obey Him.

A Final Word...

It is our prayer that this article is beneficial to you in some way. Perhaps you have heard some of these myths about the Lord’s church. Please take the time to consider what the Bible has to teach about these subjects. Pray and meditate about these things. Ask the Lord that we may all have an open heart that is attuned to following His word so that we may all enjoy eternity in heaven with the Father and the Savior. Perhaps you have heard these “myths” before and have accepted them as fact. Study what the Scriptures say, for the gospel is God’s power to save.

We also invite you to have a personal Bible study on these subjects. We would love to sit down with you and learn what the Bible teaches. If we are wrong, we will not be afraid to admit it and change our ways. “But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.” (1 Timothy 4:7).

- Sean P. Cavender, 2014 [edited]

- > "Never put much confidence in people who put no confidence in others. A man prone to suspect evil is mostly looking into his neighbor for what he sees in himself. As to the pure all things are pure, even so to the impure all things are impure!"
 - > "Truthfulness is a cornerstone of character, and if it be not firmly laid in youth, there will ever after be a weak spot in the foundation!"
 - > "Love will find a way - indifference will find an excuse!"
 - > "The reason a lot of people cannot find opportunity is that it goes around disguised as hard work!"
 - > "You cannot control the length of your life, but you can control its width and depth!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*What Has A Christian Become?*" (Text: 1 Pet. 1:22-23); Sunday evening: "*We Are Not Blind Too, Are We?*" (John 9:13-41).