

PARK HEIGHTS CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Thus Saith the Lord

CHRISTIANS IN CHURCHES

By Jeff Sweeten

In a variation of the moldy old mantra, "You think you're the only ones going to heaven" I was recently asked: "So only the Christians of the church of Christ will go to heaven?" What an interesting twist, and such a great teaching opportunity, I could not defer.

The salvation that is only in Christ Jesus (cf. Galatians 3:26-27) brings up an interesting assumption in this question, because I am not aware of any Christians that are not members of the church of Christ (Romans 16:16). The Lord's church has no formal title in the Bible and His followers only one proper name: "Christian" (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), predicted in Isaiah 62:2. When one is baptized into Christ for forgiven of sins (Acts 2:38), the Lord adds them to the church (Acts 2:47).

So, to what church did the Lord add the saved? Well, we can know it was not the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Catholic... ad nauseum; these churches didn't exist back then. In fact, the only church that could have existed is the church that Jesus said, "I will build" (Matthew 16:18), the only true existing church, then and now: His church. And, how is that church described in the New Testament? It is the **church of God** (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; and 1 Timothy 3:5), the **church of the Firstborn** (Hebrews 12:23); the **church of the living God** (1 Timothy 3:15) or just the church in a specific location (there was only one church then, cf. Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Revelation 2:1, 14). Once, the plural is used: the **churches of Christ** (Romans 16:16). Of course, many johnny-come-lately churches think this includes them but this is where fifth-grade grammar comes into play. You see, the singular of "bags of wind" is not "blowhard"; it may sound sufficient but it's just not grammatically correct. The correct singular term to articulate this phrase is "bag of wind." Therefore, the singular of "churches of Christ" is a "church of Christ."

If the Lord adds those being saved to the church, the only one to which a baptized person could have been added in Acts 2, the question assumes what cannot be. "Christians" were not added to churches that didn't exist and only churches composed of Christians only will go to Heaven.

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