

# The Church Of Christ Is Preaching Another Gospel

## OR

### Is Water Baptism Necessary For Salvation?

*"For Christ sent me not to baptize,  
but to preach the gospel"*

1 Corinthians 1:17

## PREFACE:

While there are those in the "original" Church of Christ who take great offense at being associated with the International Church of Christ (ICC), both religious bodies are preaching a false gospel of works as will be discussed further below. The main problem that the original Church of Christ has with the ICC is the ICC's cult-like authoritarian *discipleship and submission* approach to making disciples. While this is surely a commonly accepted attribute of cults in the eyes of most people, be they Christians, Jews, agnostics or atheists - it is not the definition of a cult according the Bible. The Bible says that any group who has a false gospel of Christ - yet claims to have the true gospel - is a cult. Now it does not say it in precisely those words, but from God's perspective, if it is not the true gospel, then it does not matter how much good the organization does, or how much they "teach" from the Bible, or how much they profess to follow Jesus Christ. They are a cult - a false Christian church - they are not really a Christian church, even if they call themselves "Church of Christ" or "The Church of Jesus Christ" or "God's True Church" or whatever. Period!

## INTRODUCTION:

The ***International Church Of Christ***, (ICC) also known as the Boston Movement, is yet another aggressively evangelizing cult in the sea of false churches and false teachers out in the world today. They are considered to be part of the "discipleship and submission" movement, which is basically a means of coercing people to follow certain rules and certain leaders by laying guilt trips on them when they violate "the rules". The rules can sometimes be quite biblical while other times they can be unbiblical misinterpretations of scripture. The ICC were started in the early 1970s by a man named Kip McKean along with a man named Chuck Lucas, who was pastor of a Church of Christ in the vicinity of the University of Florida in Gainesville. Lucas at that time was already involved in a campus ministry which is how he met McKean, who was a student at the university of Florida at that time.

While this article focuses mainly on their "gospel", it is worth mentioning something about their discipleship philosophy. Lucas got many of his

discipleship and evangelism ideas from a book called "The Master Plan of Evangelism" by Robert Coleman. From that book primarily, Lucas concluded that Jesus disciplined the apostles by controlling their lives and so that is how Christians are to make disciples.

Not all "Church of Christ" churches are part of the "Boston movement", yet many of the original churches preach the same false gospel (where water baptism is a requirement of salvation). Those that are part of the ICC/Boston Movement, go by the name of the city they are associated with, such as the Church Of Christ of Boston, the Church of Christ of New York, etc. They preach a false gospel because they preach yet another **works-based** gospel which is really no Gospel. The true Gospel of the Bible is the message of **God's sovereign grace** - which in its entirety, from start to finish - is a **supernatural work of Almighty God** who saves people according to His good pleasure (see Ephesians 1:3-11), and not according to who immerses themselves in water and not according to what other religious rituals they may perform or "good works" they may do. However, the Churches of Christ teach that the kind of baptism that saves a soul is a physical baptism (water baptism) - performed by man, when the Bible teaches that the baptism that saves is a spiritual baptism - performed by God, as you will see if you examine the scriptures listed below.

## ICC RECRUITING METHODS:

Usually, the ICC recruits people in the same manner as Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults, by inviting you to Bible studies or offering to go to your house to study the Bible with you. They call their Bible study sessions 'Bible Talk'. Like many other cults, they often focus on college campuses and college students. To find out if someone you have been approached by is in this cult, ask them if they believe that water baptism is necessary for salvation. If they avoid the question, or answer yes or start referring you to scriptures like these below then you can be pretty sure you are talking to one of these misguided individuals.:

**Mark 16:16** - "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

**Acts 2:38** - "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

**John 3:5** - "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

**Based on Ephesians 4:5, the Churches of Christ say there is only one type of baptism:**

**Ephesians 4:4-6** - "4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

## ARE THERE TWO BAPTISMS OR ONE?

It is true that there is only one baptism **that saves a soul**. But in the Bible, two kinds of baptism are mentioned: Spirit baptism and water baptism.

Since the Churches of Christ have a works gospel and don't understand the true gospel of salvation by grace alone, they misunderstand what Paul was saying in Ephesians 4:5. So when they see the mention of "one baptism" in Ephesians 4:5 and since they do not believe in the spiritual baptism done by the Holy Spirit **as the baptism that saves a soul**, they conclude that the baptism that provides salvation is water baptism. But then why does Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, say this:

**1 Corinthians 12:13** - "For **by one Spirit** are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Are we baptized into the Church, into God's kingdom by water baptism or by spiritual baptism? Is water baptism a part of the salvation process? Can it be? Isn't salvation a free gift from God which God gives to those He pleases to give it to?:

**Ephesians 1:3-5** - "3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will"

The Bible does speak of water baptism but **not as a means of salvation, not as a contributing factor in salvation, not as a prerequisite to salvation, not as a participation in salvation.**

Water baptism is something a believer does as an outward sign **after** God performs the supernatural work of salvation. Water baptism is one of many commands of God that a true believer will want to abide by once that believer has the spirit of God in him, once he is a new creature in Christ. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." [John 14:15] The believer will be water baptized because he **IS** saved not to become saved.

**A good tree bears good fruit - simply because it is a GOOD tree. A fig tree does not grow figs to BECOME a fig tree but because it IS a fig tree. So a true believer who has been made a Christian by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (a supernatural act of God), will want to be water baptized because he is saved and wants to publicly declare what God has done for him...**

"Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and **shew how great things God hath done unto thee**. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him." [Luke 8:38-39]

Being water baptized is one of many ways that a true believer shows the people around him what great things God has done for him by granting him true salvation - through an act of God, through the work of Christ at Calvary, and not through his own efforts (like obedience to the Bible).

## **SALVATION IS NOT ACHIEVED BY A SINNER'S WORKS:**

Salvation is something that **man cannot contribute to** in any way at all:

**Ephesians 2:8-9** - "8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Salvation is a complete work of God apart from any help from man:

**Jonah 2:9** - "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."

Aren't there any works that we can do or need to do to get to heaven?

**John 6:28-29** - "28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

What does it mean "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent?" It means that we can't do anything to save ourselves. We are hopelessly lost hell-deserving sinners. Only **the work of God** can save a

person. The work that God does is **enable** the sinner to believe in Christ as His Lord and all sufficient Savior.

**Mark 9:24** - "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

God does this work by opening a sinner's blind spiritual eyes so that he sees himself as the wretched hell-deserving sinner that God sees him as and he sees Christ as His redeemer:

**John 9:25** - "He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

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**Luke 4:18** - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised"

## THE MEANING OF WORDS IN THE BIBLE:

In the Bible, the word 'baptism' is used to refer to washing. We must not forget that many words in our English Bibles have NOT been **translated** into English, but rather they have been **transliterated**. Such is the case with the Greek word "baptisma" which is in every case (22 times in the KJV) *transliterated* as "baptism". Such is also the case with the Greek word "baptiza", which is *transliterated* "baptize" 76 times in the KJV and only actually *translated* as "wash" 2 times in the KJV. The KJV translators actually did *translate* the Greek word "bapto" into the English word as "dip" or "dipped" all 3 times that "bapto" appears in the New Testament. So if we substitute the word "wash" for baptize and "washing" for baptism wherever they occur in the New Testament, we will get a clearer picture of what God is trying to tell us about the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, not the cleansing power of H2O (water).

When God saves a person, He washes away all their sins:

**Titus 3:5** - "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

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**1John 1:7** - "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

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**Psalms 103:12** - "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he

removed our transgressions from us.”

**Psalms 32:2** – “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

**Romans 4:8** – “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

The one and ONLY baptism that causes regeneration (that brings about a person’s salvation) is a SPIRITUAL baptism:

**1Corinthians 12:13** – “For by **one Spirit are we all baptized** into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into **one Spirit**.”

**Acts 11:16** – “Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized **with the Holy Ghost**.”

**Matthew 3:11**– “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you **with the Holy Ghost**, and with fire:”

**Luke 3:16** – “John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you **with the Holy Ghost** and with fire”

**John 1:33** – “And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth **with the Holy Ghost**.”

**Acts 1:5** – “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized **with the Holy Ghost** not many days hence.”

In various places in the Bible, God refers to this spiritual Baptism, this spiritual washing as “pouring clean water” on an individual whom He is saving:

**Isaiah 44:3** – “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring”

**Ezekiel 36:25** – “Then will I **sprinkle clean water upon you**, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I **cleanse you**. 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put

within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

We see similar **imagery**, associating the imparting of the Holy Spirit, with physical water, in the following verses, but it is undeniable that the physical substance (water) has a spiritual meaning not a literal meaning:

**John 4:10** - "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

**John 4:14** - "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

**John 7:37** - "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

## MORE ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL BAPTISM:

It is the Spirit of ALMIGHTY GOD that produces spiritual life, not water Baptism:

**John 6:63** - "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Notice in the following verse that John the Baptist, not only water baptized, but he PREACHED a spiritual baptism, the baptism of repentance.

**Mark 1:4** - "John did baptize in the wilderness, and **preach** the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

God removes sin from a person (i.e. saves a person) using **His Word** as applied that person's heart by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit:

**Ephesians 5:25-27** - "25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

The things that we attempt to **do** to contribute to our salvation profit nothing. It is the **Word of God** that convicts and converts the heart of a sinner, **through the power of the Holy Spirit** which quickens (makes alive) a spiritually dead soul.

**John 6:63** - "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are **spirit**, and they are life."

**Hebrews 4:12** - "For **the word of God** is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The thief on the cross received salvation from Christ, yet he was not water baptized:

**Luke 23:43** - "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, **To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.**"

Obviously there was no way and no time for the thief to be water baptized (especially by immersion). Yet those who preach salvation by water baptism must admit that they have two salvation plans. One for those who have time to be water baptized and one for those who do not have time. However, the God of the Bible has only one salvation plan and it is based on His grace and mercy (based on Christ's atonement alone), not based on man's ability to get himself water baptized:

**Romans 9:15** - "For he saith to Moses, **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.**"

**Titus 3:5** - "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

## **WHY PEOPLE INSIST ON PARTICIPATING IN THEIR SALVATION:**

Why do people insist on doing something, like baptizing, to get someone into heaven? They want to establish their own righteousness, their own salvation plan that puts them in the driver's seat, so they can get themselves saved when it is convenient for them by being water baptized or doing some other religious rituals.

**Romans 10:2-3** - "2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God,



but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

People in the Bible were saved without being water baptized first. Peter first preached to Cornelius and his household. Then Cornelius and his household were saved, received the Holy Ghost, and THEN were water baptized **afterwards**:

**Acts 10:44-47** - "44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

God saved the Ethiopian eunuch by using Philip to preach the Word of God to him, which God used to cause him to become saved (i.e. to believe in Christ - which only a saved person can do according to Romans 8:7-8, Romans 3:11, etc.). Water baptism was performed **afterwards**:

**Acts 8:34-37** - "34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

### **BUT IT SURE SOUNDS LIKE WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING:**

What about Bible verses that seem to be saying that we need to be water baptized in order to be saved:

**Acts 2:38** - "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

We must first understand that **REPENTANCE is a gift from God**, and that we cannot TRULY repent (truly turn from our sinful life) just because someone tells us to:

**Acts 5:31** - "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

**Acts 11:18** – “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

**2Timothy 2:25** – “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;”

Once God **grants** a person repentance, they are at that point saved, and then it becomes appropriate for them to be water baptized. True repentance involves a turning away from sin and a completely changed attitude about any and all sin, which is a change of heart that only God can perform:

**Ezekiel 36:25** – “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”

So what is the purpose of water baptism? First of all, it is a commandment of Jesus Christ:

**Matthew 28:19** – “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”

Secondly, water **baptism is an outward sign of the inward spiritual baptism** (heart cleansing). It is a sign of the new life that has **already occurred** in a person’s heart:

**Romans 6:4** – “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

### **WHAT DOES “BURIED WITH HIM BY BAPTISM” MEAN?**

To find out what “buried with him by baptism into death” really means we need to look at the rest of the passage:

**Romans 6:5-11** – “5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth

no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

True salvation causes a person's spiritually dead soul to be resurrected, giving them a new nature and power over sin, enabling them to have victory over their old sin nature. In addition, the sins of all whom Christ came to save were buried with Christ at the cross. They were fully paid for. They can no longer haunt the redeemed:

**Psalms 103:12** - "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

**Romans 8:1** - "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

By the outward sign of water baptism, a true believer is acknowledging their association with Christ and His death on their behalf. They are publicly acknowledging that their old self has died and a new creature has been born of the Spirit of God:

**2Corinthians 5:17** - "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

There is no point to being water baptized if Christ is not already living in you:

**Galatians 2:20-21** - "20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

## WHOSE RIGHTEOUSNESS SAVES THE SINNER?

If righteousness comes by water baptism (i.e. works of the law - ANY human effort), then Christ is dead in vain. At the cross, Christ paid the sin debt - IN FULL - of all those He came to save. Christ said "It is finished" in John 19:30. The work of salvation was finished. You can't add anything to what Christ as already done. CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS - His atoning sacrifice was a perfect and sufficient payment for sin. **God the Father is well pleased with His Son even if you aren't.** You can go around saying that "faith without works is dead" but that will not change the fact that works are only the fruit -

the result – of a person’s salvation (true salvation in a true believer):

**James 2:18** - “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”

**Galatians 5:22-24** - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

The primary “work” that a true believer performs is to preach the **true Gospel** of salvation by grace ALONE through the atonement of Christ ALONE apart from any involvement on the part of the sinner. The “work” of the unsaved sinner is his sins. He is a “worker” of iniquity (Psalms 5:5). That is all he has to offer God. He may think he is doing something good but his efforts are tainted with sin, especially self-righteousness. Until he is converted by God all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), INCLUDING WATER BAPTISM! Baptizing a lost sinner in water is like whitewashing a tomb full of dead men’s bones...

**Matthew 23:27** - “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.”

## CONCLUSION:

Dear reader, you and I are completely at the mercy of God. Perhaps you are one of His elect and He will save you if He has not done so already. But He will not do so based on you being baptized in water.

**Have you been truly baptized by GOD?  
How do you know?**

**Has GOD converted YOU yet?**

**Matthew 18:3** - “And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

**Have you realized your lost spiritual condition?**

**Luke 19:10** - “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

**May God cause you to know your sinfulness, to cry out to him for mercy, and to seek Him!**

**Luke 18:13** - "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

**Isaiah 55:6** - "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near"

**Since God uses the Bible to convict and convert sinners and to reveal Himself to mankind, the Bible is the place to go to seek God and the salvation He provides.**

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**SEE ALSO:**

A Brief Rebuttal of Baptismal Regeneration by James White

Baptismal Regeneration by Charles Spurgeon

Refutes to the International Church of Christ

Against Baptismal Regeneration: An Exposition of John 3:5 & Titus 3:5

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