

# Christianity: The Way God Intended

Aaron Beard  
Perry Hill Road  
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## Introduction:

### A. We live in a world characterized by religious confusion

- Especially here in the south it seems there are churches on almost every corner:
  - Denominationalism is something people have just taken as being necessary
  - It is extremely difficult to find people who have similar beliefs in religious matters
  - Illustration:** Door knocking... seems almost every home is something different
- When you discuss this problem with people and ask, "Do you think this pleases the Lord? Do you think this is what Jesus intended?" Invariable and rightfully they say, "NO!"
- To many the problem is clear; but, to many the solution seems quite murky!
  - "How do you fix it?" We ask → "You can't," they respond, "We're all different!"
  - So people just go on their way accepting what they know is a problem w/o going after the solution... possibly because they see the solution as being "too hard"
  - The solution? Return back to the source! See Christianity the way God intended!

### B. Illustration: Water at the source

- Today many people are drinking religious water that is corrupted! Somewhere along the line opossums were put in the trough – people teaching things not scripturally based!
- Realize that the problem is not with the spring... must go all the way back to the source!

### C. In the book of Acts we see Christianity the way God intended: **Acts 11:19-26**

## I. First Century Christianity Was Found In Preaching The Lord:

### A. Simple: In the first century all their preaching centered around Jesus Christ! (**Acts 11:20**)

- The apostles preaching and teaching never centered around themselves... they were not self promoters, but rather promoted Jesus Christ! (**2 Cor. 4:5**)
  - Constantly emphasized: HIM WE PREACH! (**Col. 1:28-29**)
  - Jesus was the centerpiece... the core of what they preached
- When they spoke to the lost it could simply be said that they preached Christ to them:
  - Philip to the Samaritans: "Went down... and preached Christ to them" (**Acts 8:5**)
  - Philip to the Eunuch: "Opened his mouth and preached Jesus to him" (**Acts 8:35**)
  - After Saul's conversion: "Immediately he preached the Christ" (**Acts 9:20**)
- Goal of the apostles always seemed that they step out and place Christ in the spotlight:
  - They never wanted their own selves and abilities to get in the way of the gospel
  - They wanted people to see Jesus Christ – never Paul or Peter! (**I Cor. 2:1-5**)
- When you read the book of Acts you see that it doesn't take long every time they preach to the lost to get on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus:
  - Not surprising... It's exactly what Jesus told them to do! (**Mark 16:15-16**)
    - 1) What is the gospel? It literally means: GOOD NEWS!
    - 2) The good news is that Jesus came, died, was buried, and arose from the dead and through this we can have forgiveness of our sins!
  - We need to realize that this is something that we all can do!
    - 1) We read about how the disciples went everywhere preaching the word
    - 2) We may shun from teaching others hiding behind inability or ignorance
  - If you know about Jesus and you know about becoming a Christian... you can do what we so often read about the disciples doing!

### B. What creed did they use? Jesus Christ was their creed!

- In the denominational world they have what they refer to as creeds and creed books
  - These books or simple statements about what they, as a religious group, believe
  - Creed simple means: "I believe"

- c. **Illustration:** Two men and a truck – moving a denominational preacher... he could quote his “creed” and asked what mine was! I said, “Whatever Jesus says!”
- 2. What creed did first century Christians go by? They said, “I believe JESUS!”
- 3. You do not read anywhere in the NT about creeds being made additional to God’s word that was being revealed to say what should or shouldn’t be believed!
  - a. If Christians then had no need for creeds and creed books... why would we today suppose that we have to have them?
  - b. If you go back to the source you will find that the words of the Lord were good enough for them... they should be good enough for us!
- 4. The scriptures are the only creed we need! (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**) – That’s Christianity the way God intended it!

## II. First Century Christianity Was Found In Turning To The Lord:

### A. A great example of turning to the Lord: The Day Of Pentecost (Acts 2)

- 1. This is the spring in its purest form!
  - a. This is the very source and the beginning of Christianity!
  - b. This is the first sermon exactly the way Peter preached it!
- 2. Peter begins by convicting them about Jesus Christ (**vs. 22ff**)
  - a. The things Peter and the others say works! The people believe!
  - b. Not only do they believe but they are convicted of their sin, brought to their knees they cry out for help! (**vs. 37**)
- 3. In answer to their question notice how Peter responds: (**vs. 38-41**)
  - a. They asked, “What shall we do?” → If there is nothing that we should do to be saved, then why did Peter even bother answering their question!
  - b. If just belief was necessary, they would already have been saved and the apostles should have told them that!
- 4. In turning to the Lord what did these people do?
  - a. They heard the word... Jesus Christ’s death, burial, & resurrection preached
  - b. They were pricked to the heart... they believed the message
  - c. Seeking help Peter baptized them in the name of Jesus Christ!

### C. What you often hear about downstream does not sound like this at all!

- 1. The things I hear my religious friends & neighbors talking about does not sound like this!
  - a. I hear some discussing baptism as being “an outward sign of the inward man”
  - b. I hear people inviting others to “Say the sinners prayer” and they’ll be saved!
- 2. If what we are hearing whether from this pulpit or elsewhere does not match what’s at the source of the spring, what does that tell us?
  - a. It tells me that somewhere along the line teaching was introduced that was not what came from this spring!
  - b. Opossums were put in the trough and people are drinking corrupted water!
- 3. If you have not come to Christ according to the way He has said, do it today!

### D. What do you call these people who were preached to and turned to the Lord?

- 1. They were called Christians! (**Acts 11:26**) → No big surprise that they’d be called this!
  - a. They heard CHRIST preached, they turned to CHRIST, they are added to CHRIST
  - b. It just makes since that you would call these people CHRISTIANS!
- 2. People sometimes ask, “What kind of Christian are you?” – LOADED QUESTION!
  - a. I understand they are seeking by some title to know what my basic beliefs are
  - b. **Illustration:** Calvinist at gas station consistently called me an “Armenean”
  - c. When you answer, “I am just a Christian... no particular type” they aren’t satisfied!
- 3. There was a problem in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century of people divided over names: **I Cor. 1:10-13**
  - a. Two questions: (1) Did \_\_\_\_\_ die for me? (2) Was I baptized in \_\_\_\_\_ name?
  - b. Only can we say this of Jesus – Only His name should we wear!
- 4. What’s the point? We are not to be divided among religious teachers, bodies, or beliefs!
  - a. We should not be some particular brand of Christians – Foreign to scriptures

b. We should simply be Christians!

### III. First Century Christianity Was Found In Being Added To The Lord:

#### A. Someone might ask, "What is the church of Christ?"

1. First of all, let's understand what the church of Christ is NOT:
  - a. The church of Christ, at least in how we are using it tonight, is not just one group of Christians who meet in one location... it's much bigger than that!
  - b. It is not some mega denomination comprised of a bunch of local churches of Christ
  - c. It is also not a heading under which falls all the different denominations → You don't add together all the denominations to get the Lord's church!
2. The church of Christ is simple!
  - a. People who've heard Christ preached, turned to Him, and have been added to Him
  - b. **Illustration:** Silhouette of a body with stick men inside of it
  - c. This church has often been described as all the saved of all time of all nations
  - d. Every time a person turns to the Lord, he is added into that body (**Acts 11:24**)
3. This body of Christ is the same thing as His church!
  - a. Terms that are used interchangeably: (**Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18**)
  - b. What is the Lord's church? It's the body of Christ... saved people added to Him!

#### B. An Important Question: How Do Am I Added Into The Body Of Christ?

1. Being found in the body of Christ, in His church, is of up-most importance!
  - a. Inside of that body is where one finds salvation... outside of the body means one is outside of Christ which means he is lost!
  - b. It is also inside the body of Christ where one finds all spiritual blessings
2. So how does one become added to the body of Christ?
  - a. **Gal. 3:26-27:** "Baptized INTO Christ..."
  - b. **I Cor. 12:13:** "Baptized into one body..."
3. It doesn't get much clearer than that... when one is baptized into Christ they are then added by the Lord into His body!

#### C. How Many Bodies Does The Lord Have?

1. This may seem like a rhetorical question; however, understanding the answer and accepting it is fundamental to following Christianity the way God intended it in a world full of religious confusion!
2. Just as there is only one Lord, there is only ONE body! (**Eph. 4:4**)
  - a. If the body and the church are the same thing, then how many churches does Christ have? ONE!
  - b. Speaking of the church Jesus said, "I will build My church" (**Matt. 16:18**)
  - c. This church is not a big group of churches, but is simply every person who has ever obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ!
3. **Acts 2:46-47** – The Lord added to the church those who were being saved
  - a. What church did Jesus add them to? His church! His body!
  - b. These people were not part of some denomination or other group, but simply Christians who were part of the body of Christ!
  - c. That's all you will read about when you go back to the source!

### IV. First Century Christianity Was Found In Continuing With The Lord:

#### A. Having preached the Lord, believed and turned to the Lord, and being added to the Lord, they then continued with the Lord: (**vs. 23**)

1. The KJV words it this way: "...With purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord"
  - a. Definition: To glue, to adhere, to cleave, to join oneself to
  - b. Barnabas encourages them that with all their heart they would stick to Christ!
2. They understood their relationship to Christ in being members of His body!
  - a. They were members of the body of Christ and He was the head
  - b. They understood that they could not make a move unless the head told them to

- c. **Col. 2:9-10, 18** → Complete through Him, He is the head of all rule and authority, therefore we are admonished: **HOLD FAST TO THE HEAD!**
- 3. Those who are His people hear His voice and His voice only! (**John 10:1ff**)
  - a. That is exactly we see First Century Christians were!
  - b. Attitude we must have if we're going to have Christianity the way God intended!

**B. Downstream there are a lot of other voices that you just cannot listen to!**

- 1. Paul went from church to church preaching and teaching the word: (**I Cor. 4:17**)
  - a. Paul could preach the exact same thing in every church that he went to!
  - b. Illustration: Philippi, Corinth, Antioch, Lystra, Tarsus → Same thing!
  - c. What he directed one church, he would direct the others! (**I Cor. 7:17**)
- 2. If Paul was to try to do this today, how far could he go?
  - a. How many churches could Paul preach at before he ran into great opposition?
  - b. He could not teach the same thing in every church because it would not match what they were teaching and practice!
- 3. Why was Paul was able to do this?
  - a. There were no denominations in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century... they simply cleaved to the Lord
  - b. Where in the New Testament do we find the denominations that we see today?
  - c. In the first century the Christians did not find them necessary, because they aren't! They just simply clung to the Lord!

**C. There came a point in time in which Christians began to stop cleaving to the head!**

- 1. Did things ever digress to the point where things were taught that weren't right? YES!
- 2. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus that there would be a departure (**Acts 20:29-31**)
  - a. Some would come into the flocks disguised a sheep but teaching false things
  - b. Paul's warning was that they'd drawn men away from the Lord and to themselves
- 3. Eventually this is exactly what happened! (**Rev. 2:5**)
  - a. The lamp stand represents the church... Seven were under discussion here
  - b. What does this mean? It means that the Lord would no longer recognize them as being a group of His people! They'd no longer belong to Him!
  - c. They might still consider themselves a church of the Lord, but they wouldn't be!
- 4. See, when you get down to it, what the sign out front means very little!
  - a. There are many churches that claim to be a church that belongs to Christ; however, they are not cleaving to the Lord!
  - b. If we're following the teaching of the Lord in the Bible, then that's what we are!
  - c. If we stop adhering to the head, it doesn't matter what our sign says, we're not His!

**Conclusion:**

- A. Christianity the way God intended is found in preaching Jesus Christ, turning to Jesus Christ, being added to Jesus Christ, and cleaving to Jesus Christ!
  - 1. Question: Can you do these things without ever hearing of any denomination?
  - 2. Question: Can you do these things without ever being a part of any denomination?
  - 3. Christianity the way God intends it is not complex and hard to understand – Its simple!
- B. Let's us always examine ourselves in what we believe and practice to make sure that what we are drinking is water in its purest form!