

When did the body of Christ begin?

Much confusion exists in the body of Christ today.

All Christians are aware of the verse - "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

Many Christians do seriously study the Bible today with this verse in mind. We all want to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and hear the words "Well done!" However, many study the Bible with preconceived ideas and try to get verses to back up their position without letting the English in the King James Bible reveal what it says. Too often, we quickly jump in with 'what we think it means.'

Where should a Christian get their doctrine from?

There is absolutely no doubt that it is to be taken from Paul. He says "**Be ye followers of me**, even as I also am of Christ."

(1 Corinthians 11:1).

Also "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences **contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.**"

(Romans 16:17).

So from Romans to Philemon, we can be assured of no contradicting doctrine.

So where does the confusion come from?

Unfortunately, well-meaning Christians are misquoting Matthew, Acts, James, John, Peter, Revelation, the gospels and even the Old Testament, without realizing that this is not following Paul.

A simple rule of thumb

"If it agrees with Paul, it's doctrine for the Christian."

But what if it's in the New Testament?

That doesn't matter. If it doesn't agree with Paul, it's historical and/or spiritual but not doctrinal for the Christian.

So does this mean then, that the church started with Paul?

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If it does, how do we handle Romans 16:7 "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, **who also were in Christ before me.**" Obviously the body of Christ existed before Paul came on the scene.

In addition we have the following:

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because **I persecuted the church of God.**"
(1 Corinthians 15:9)

Did the church exist at Pentecost?

Yes. "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord **added to the church** daily such as should be **saved.**" (Acts 2:47)

So was the gospel of Paul preached at Pentecost?

No. It was a gospel given by God to Peter to preach to the nation of Israel.

What was Peter's gospel?

"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." (Acts 2:38)

Could people get saved today with Peter's gospel?

No, they'd go straight to hell. There is no mentioned of the `blood of Jesus being shed for sins' or `believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But at the time, this is what the Lord commanded for the nation of Israel to be saved and put into the body of Christ.

So has the gospel of Paul dropped water baptism in order to be saved?

Yes. Paul says to the jailer "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." There is no mention of water baptism here.

Has water baptism ceased for this church age?

No. If Paul thought it had been, he sinned and never repented of it. He was baptized himself. "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and **was baptized.**"
(Acts 9:18)

Did Paul ever baptize?

Yes. If baptism ceased at Paul, why did he persist in baptizing?

"I thank God that **I baptized** none of you, but **Crispus and Gaius**; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And **I baptized also the household of Stephanas**: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other."
(1 Corinthians 1:14-16)

Is this water baptism for salvation?

No, but it is an ordinance.

If I don't get water baptized after I am saved, am I really saved?

Yes. Water baptism for the Christian is only a symbol of what has occurred.

Someone said that ordinances were only for the Old Testament?

That's incorrect. Paul says "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and **keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.**"

(1 Corinthians 11:2)

What is the other ordinance?

The Lord's supper.

Didn't that stop at Paul too?

No. He writes to the Corinthian church about the keeping of this ordinance and the warnings attached to it. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, **ye do show the Lord's death till he come.**"

(1 Corinthians 11:26) **But hasn't the Lord come in the form of the Holy Ghost?** Yes he has, but this is not what this verse means. The English - 'till he come' - has a particular meaning.

So in summary, when did the church start?

When the veil in the temple was ripped in two. God put many Jews into the body of Christ even though it wasn't under Paul's preaching and Paul's gospel. Just because the church was not evident and operating under the gospel of Paul like today, it doesn't mean it didn't exist then. The Lord put people into the body of Christ under different rules than that of Paul.

Still not convinced?

Answer this then. How were Peter, James and John put into Christ before his death? "...as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, **that they also may be one in us:... I in them,** and thou in me, that **they may be made perfect in one;** and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

(John 17:21, 23).

Now there is only one body of Christ - not two. God can do what he likes, when he likes..... and he doesn't have to follow our reasoning.

By Harley Hitchcock.

John 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me **I have given them;** ...