

# Why Should I Be A Member Of The Church?

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In the eyes of most of the world the glorious church of our Lord Jesus Christ has been relegated to a position of very low esteem. This unfortunate and misguided notion is largely attributable to three causes. First, the immense popularity of dispensational premillennial eschatology fosters a low view of the church. This view holds that the church is a temporary, last-minute, emergency stop-gap measure instituted hastily in the wake of the Jews' surprising rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. Second, the traditional appeal to American culture, which propagandizes that everyone must be free to do his own thing, advances the idea that one can worship as well by himself in his own way as he can in cooperation with the church in God's way. Third, many simply rebel against the constraints of authority and refuse to be governed by God's Word. These rationalize their justification on the basis of the inconsistencies and failings of Christians.

However, when one recognizes the Bible as God's Word, the apparent fallacy of such rationalizations is evident. The fact is, our Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily shed his blood upon the cross of Calvary for the express purpose of purchasing the church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25). Furthermore, it was by the power of his resurrection from the dead that he ascended "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (that God- AWB) hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:21- 23). In Colossians 1:18 Paul styled it this way: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Since Christ purchased the church with his own blood and since he is the head of the church which is his body, it is obvious that the church is of paramount importance in the life of every child of God.

Yet, the question remains in the minds of many, "Why must I be a member of the church?" Of what advantage is membership in the church to the Christian? As always in all religious inquiries, the Word of God provides the answer to this question. In the Scriptures five compelling reasons are given which clearly demonstrate the absolute essentiality of being a member of the church.

### **1. THE CHURCH: GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE**

In Ephesians 3:8-11 Paul reveals that he received his apostleship in order that he might be able "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:" (Eph. 3:8-11).

Clearly, if the church is a part of God's eternal purpose (and the Scriptures declare it to be) then the modern dispensational premillennial notions of the church are wrong.

In accord with this is the fact that it is easily established that the promised Messianic Kingdom of Old Testament prophecy (Isa. 2:2-4; Dan 2; et al.) is the church. For in Mark 9:1 Jesus declared that the kingdom would come with power during the lifetime of the apostles. In Luke 24:49 he said the power would be received by them in Jerusalem. In Acts 1:8 he revealed that the power would come on the apostles when the Holy Ghost came upon them. Then in Acts 2 the Holy Ghost came with power upon the apostles in the city of Jerusalem. Clearly this is, according to Mark 9:1, when the kingdom came-- the Messianic Kingdom of Old Testament prophecy.

Interestingly, what was established in Acts 2, the kingdom, is called in verse 47 "the church". "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Therefore, all men should be members of the church because it is God's eternally proposed institution for the saved. It is the kingdom of Old Testament prophecy.

## **2. THE CHURCH: PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH**

Everyone is interested in the truth. No one purposely desires to follow a lie. In I Timothy 3:15 the Scripture speaks of "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." In other words, as the column supports the superstructure or as the foundation supports the entire building, just so the church supports and dispenses the truth. If one wishes to be among those who stand for truth, who support the truth, who dispense the truth, and who themselves are guided by the truth, he must be a member of the church.

## **3. THE CHURCH: THE PLACE OF ALL; SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS**

In Ephesians 1:3 Paul says, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The "heavenly places" where we can receive all spiritual blessings are in the church. The context of chapter 1, especially verses 4-10 and 21-23, clearly indicate this. However, it is even more certainly established by the phrase "in Christ." Men obtain entrance into Christ by believing in him, repenting of their sins, confessing their faith and being immersed in water for the remission of their sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3,4; 10:9,10; Gal. 3:26,27). When men obey the gospel they are added to the church by God (Acts 2:47). Therefore, we receive all spiritual blessings in the church of Christ.

It is in Christ that we are redeemed (Rom. 3:24). It is in Christ that we receive forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). In Christ we become a new creature (II Cor. 5:17). It is in Christ that we find spiritual life (Jn. 1:4). It is in Christ that we are reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:18-20). In Christ we are reconciled in one body (Eph. 2:16). That one body (Eph. 4:4-6) is the body of which Christ is the head (Col. 1:18). It is the church (Eph. 121-23.). Only in the church of Christ is one entitled to spiritual blessings such as these. In fact, all spiritual blessings are obtained only by our being members of the church.

## **4. THE CHURCH: THE SAVED**

It is true that the church does not save us. In fact it saves no one. Jesus is the Savior. But the church is the saved. The Bible explains that the "one body" is the church (Eph. 1:21-23; Col. 1:18,24). Thus to be in Christ is to be in his church. Since being reconciled unto God means being forgiven of sins, people are

saved, pardoned or reconciled to God in the church. Stated syllogistically:

(1) Men are reconciled in one body (Eph. 2:16>.

(2) That body is the church (Eph. 121-23).

(3) Therefore people are saved or reconciled only in the church, the one body.

This is in perfect accord with Ephesians 5:23 which says, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body, one must be a member of the church in order to be saved.

True, the church does not save anyone; but Christ saves the church. Clearly, salvation is promised only to those who are in the body of Christ. The church is not the savior; it is the saved. All who are saved are in the church. The Bible says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

## **5. THE CHURCH: PRESENTED TO CHRIST**

When Christ comes again he is coming to judge the world (II Thess. 1:6-9) and to claim the faithful in Christ-- that is, the church, for which he gave himself.

Ephesians 5:25-27 states:

"Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 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".

From these five considerations it is easily seen that in order for any reasoning man to be saved he must be a member of the church that he can read about in the New Testament.