

THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

5 - Why Should One Be A Part Of The Glorious Church?

Many people today seek to discredit any kind of relationship with the church. Some claim they want Christ, but not the church. We have studied enough in prior lessons to see the importance of the church, and why we should be a part of it. We will expand on that in this lesson.

Salvation by Christ is in the church. The church is the body of Christ. "And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22,23). Christ is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). If you are not in the church, you are not a part of the body of which Christ is the Savior. The church does not save, but Christ saves the church. The church is Christ's spiritual body, and He loves this church more than He loved His physical body for He gave His physical body for the church. That is where we should want to be.

No thoughtful person would think of injuring or destroying the church, the body of Christ. He would prefer to have been in the mob that destroyed Christ's physical body than destroying His spiritual body (I Corinthians 3:16,17).

There are other reasons for being a part of the church. To be in the church is to be in the family of God. Baptism puts one in the body (I Corinthians 12:13). But baptism puts one into God's family. "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26,27). If the same thing puts you into both the body and the family, it is impossible to be in one without being in the other. Why would one not want to be in the church?

To be in the church is to be a living stone in God's spiritual temple. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Cor. 3:16). If God is building His dwelling place on earth of those who are in the church, no one should desire to be out of that spiritual building.

To be part of the church is to be a citizen in the kingdom of God. "(God)...who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. 1:13). They became citizens by being baptized (Col. 2:12). The kingdom will be presented to God (I Corinthians 15:24). The thing that makes one a citizen puts him in the church.

The attitude many have toward the church is wrong. The church is blood bought. "Feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). To be in the church is to

be among those for whom Christ died. It is doing despite to Christ to profess reverence for Christ and sneer at His church for which He died, or to speak lightly of it. Such an attitude reveals a lack of proper regard for sacred things, and shows ignorance of the relationship between Christ and His church. When Paul was persecuting the church, he was persecuting Christ. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9:4,5). Thus the way we treat the church is the way we treat Christ. To speak lightly of the church is to treat Christ with contempt for the church is His body (Col. 1:18). You cannot reverence Christ and hold His body in contempt.

How does one become a part of the church? The great commission sets the stage. "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). "Thus it is written, That the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations" (Luke 24:46,47). Notice the individual requirements of each account. If we take the different items mentioned by each writer we find preach, believe, repent, be baptized, remission of sins. From the commission we turn to the examples of the preaching done by the apostles laboring under the commission, and we learn how people were added to the church.

The first example was Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter and the others were guided by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Thus we know that what they said was from God and cannot be denied. Peter preached Christ (Acts 2:22-24). "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36). This produced faith. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter replied, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). They responded. "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). They that were baptized became the church (Acts 8:1). You can

study all the rest of the New Testament and not see an exception. All were added at the same stage of obedience.

Other examples should be studied. The Samaritans (Acts 8:5-13). Philip preached, they believed and were baptized. Repentance is not mentioned, but they turned from Simon which shows they changed their minds. The Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40). We see the same harmony with the great commission. The jailor (Acts 16:25-34). Once the jailor asked, Paul wasted no time talking about how poorly he had been treated, but preached the word. The people believed. Repentance is seen in washing their stripes, and they were baptized. The Corinthians (Acts 18:8).

If the gospel is preached today and people hear it, believe it, and are baptized, will they not be part of the church of God? If not, why not? Are you a part of that blood bought body? You should be! If you want to forsake Satan and be reconciled to God, obey His gospel (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

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