

Salvation and Church Membership
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The title of our lesson is: "Salvation and Church Membership."

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The Bible clearly teaches that there is life after death. And it teaches that a person will live either in a place of rest in the presence of God forever, or in a place of punishment separated from God forever.

The saved are those who will live forever with God.

Too few people in the world seem interested in talking about salvation. Those who are, have differing views about what salvation consists of and how to obtain it.

Yet, the Bible is clear on this as well.

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God does the saving.

Yes, sin is in the world. We're tempted to soften its harshness with carefully chosen words. But this actually works against us ... in Satan's favor.

Let's be upfront with this. Sin is sin. Did David say, "I've been a bad boy?"

God sets the rules. Disobedience is sin. We all sin.

Sin separates us from God (Isa 59:2; Gal 5:4).

This is why everyone needs forgiveness of their sins.

Salvation is the pardon or forgiveness of God. It is Him ... it is God "blotting out" our sins.

God does the saving. No one with unforgiven sins can live in the presence of God.

So, the question before us that begs asking is, "How does a person take advantage of this forgiveness?"

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Many have the idea that the Church forgives sins.

But this is not so. The Church does not do the saving, God does.

So, then why is it important to be a member of the Church?

We're speaking of the Church that Jesus built ... the Church we read about in the New Testament.

Can a person enjoy the salvation that God provides ... without being in the Church that Jesus built?

No.

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The Church is in no way incidental to salvation. Rather, it is vitally important. The Church does not forgive sins, rather the Church is WHERE salvation is found.

“WHERE ... salvation is found.”

The wise person says ... “Then the Church ... is where I must be. I must be ... in the Church.”

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What is Jesus’ attitude toward the Church? What is His position on how essential the Church is ... to salvation?

Life is in the blood. No one doubts that. Jesus sacrificed His ... to purchase the Church.

He purchased it with His own blood, Acts 20:28 says. His precious blood, 1 Peter 1:18-19 tells us. The sinless Lamb of God.

Eph 5:25 says He gave Himself up for Her as a loving husband might do for his own wife. For “Her,” the Church. She is the bride of Christ.

It’s clear how important and essential the Church is ... when we reflect on Jesus’ attitude towards Her ... when we reflect on the price He paid.

To top it off ... Jesus left the glory of Heaven and came to earth to accomplish all this.

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Being in the Church ... and being in Christ are the same thing. A person can’t be “in Christ” without being “in the church.” You can’t be “in the Church” without being “in Christ.”

In the Church ... in Christ ... is where salvation is found. It’s where God grants salvation for sin.

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Christ is the Head, and the Church is His Body (Col 1:18).

Christians are members of the Church. Christians are members of Jesus’ body. Christians here at Lorain Avenue are the body of Christ, a local congregation of the Church (1 Cor 12:27).

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The scriptures are full of easy-to-understand examples. Each tells the same truth about the Church from a different perspective.

We’ve been talking about Christians as being members of Jesus’ Body, wherein salvation is to be obtained.

The Church is also Christ’s Kingdom, over which He is King. A person cannot be a subject of the King without first becoming a citizen of His Kingdom. 1 Tim 6:15 says that Jesus Christ is the “blessed and only sovereign, the King of Kings.” Col 1:13 tells us that God grants salvation in His Son’s Kingdom.

Salvation is found in the Church. Salvation is found in the Kingdom. Same salvation. Same place.

Christ is the Bridegroom; the Church is His Bride (Eph. 5:23-32). We’ve already touched on that. The two are one ... Christ and the Church ... just as husband and wife are one flesh. A Christian ... a child of God ... is related to Christ by being a member of the Church, a member of the Bride, a member of the Body.

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Eph 2:13 says that a person who realizes they are far from God and Christ ... can be brought near through Jesus' shed blood.

Eph 2:16 says that a person can be reconciled to God ... in Christ's body ... which was purchased by His blood.

Remember ... that sin separates us from God? Well, forgiveness of sin reconciles us with God.

The shedding of Christ's blood didn't automatically forgive your sins. But it made possible the entrance into the place where forgiveness can be found ... can be had.

To gain access to God's forgiveness ... a person has to be in Christ ... has to be in His body ... has to be a citizen of His Kingdom ... has to be a member of His Church

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In the Church ... that's where all spiritual blessings are to be had. Not just some. Not just a lot. But ALL.

There are NO spiritual blessing to be had ... outside of Christ ... outside the Church. NONE

Eph 1:3 clearly states that ALL spiritual blessings are in Christ Jesus.

The Church is the "Fulness of Him that fills all in all" (Eph 1:23). The Fulness of Christ. It is where all ... that God and Christ have to give ... is to be found.

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Many have searched Ancestry.COM ... for records of their genealogy. I know you understand the significance of where you've been and where you're going in life. Knowing about it. Wanting it to be accurate.

Consider this. God has a record of you. Of everyone who is and has ever been. Not on Ancestry ... but in Heaven.

Just as your earthy genealogy tells what family you are part of ... God's Spiritual records indicate whether or not you are part of the family of God.

Under the Law of Moses, physical birth records were meticulously kept and preserved. Under the Gospel Law of Christ, spiritual birth records are kept in Heaven.

Being a member of the Church of Christ means you have your name enrolled In Heaven (Heb 12:22-23).

Sadly ... and tragically ... Rev 20:15 says ... that ... if your name is NOT enrolled in Heaven ... it means you'll be eternally lost at the judgment.

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The process and conditions that save a person from sin ... are identical to the process and conditions ... that put a person into Christ... ... that put a person into the Church.

Acts 2:38 says to "repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins."

Mark 16:15-16 says that "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." It takes both to be saved ... belief in Jesus as Christ and baptism. In that order.

Gal 3:26-27 says that faith leads to baptism, and baptism puts a person into Christ.

Combine these passages ... and you get ... "baptism saves you and puts you into Christ."

A person does not join the Church. And the Church doesn't decide who is and who is not ... a member of Christ's Body ... a citizen of Christ's Kingdom ... one who constitutes His Bride.

Christ adds that person. Christ adds those to whom God has granted salvation. Acts 2:41 says that the Lord adds day-to-day ... those who are being saved.

Eph 4:4-6 says that there is only one Body, one Faith, and one Baptism. There is, therefore, no such a thing taught as being saved by one process and then joining any religious body of your choice by another process.

Who alone saves? God does ... in His Son. Is anyone saved outside of the Church? No!

When the conditions of salvation are met, a person is added to the Church.

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Let's look a bit closer now ... into how a person becomes a member of the Church.

Christ said that one must be born again (John 3:3-5). It's a new birth, He said ... and it's a new "kind" of birth.

He said that a person rises up out of the water of baptism ... in the semblance of a birth. It is how one enters into His Kingdom ... into His Church.

Such a person is begotten again. Not physically as a newborn baby, but spiritually as a newborn Christian. Led to baptism by a faith resulting from inspired teaching (1 Pet 1:23). Rising up to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4).

In Matt 28:18-20 Jesus commissioned His Apostles to "make disciples of all nations by baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Baptizing them into the family name of God. Into the Body of Christ.

Rom 10:13 says that "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

When a person dials 9-1-1, what do they want? What do they expect?

When they're in danger, they want to be rescued.

But a lot more is involved than simply pushing buttons on a phone.

Most people already know where to turn in an emergency. They're able to realize when they're in danger. They want to be saved.

People trust that the professionals who respond are able to save them. They're willing to do as they're told when the EMT's or police or fire trucks arrive.

But the person in jeopardy has got to make the call. They have to speak up and state the nature of their emergency and give their address.

Calling on the name of the Lord to be saved is no different in concept.

A person must hear what God has to say about their condition ... and what to do about it. Rom 10:17 says that "Faith comes from hearing the message of the Gospel, and the message comes through the Word of God." Too many people stake their eternity on false information. There's no need for such foolishness when the truth is at their fingertips.

People must believe what they hear. They must believe they're in sin ... and that baptism into Christ is the solution. The only solution. However, If a person were to simply stop right there ... at belief ... no rescue from sin could happen.

People have to do what God instructs. All that He instructs. They have to submit to His wisdom and will.

Christians at Corinth believed and made the wise choice. Rom 6:17-18 says, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart the teaching you committed to, and having been freed from sin, you became servants of righteousness."

First ... they were outside of Christ in sin. Next, they believed and were baptized. And then, they were in Christ, in the Church, and saved (Rom 6:3-8).

A person must be willing to go all the way ... submitting to a water burial being born anew. Countless numbers of people having been fed false doctrine on this matter have stopped at this point ... believing that baptism is not needed. This is an incomplete belief.

Most understand that repentance is required. This can be hard ... undergoing a change of heart and will. It's a complete makeover ... a conversion.

Now, people who have fallen for what is called "faith only" doctrine only believe part of the Gospel message. And because of this, their repentance is also incomplete because they continue to reject God's terms of salvation. It's sad. Scary-sad.

Faith leading to baptism is the key. It puts you into Christ where EVERY spiritual blessing is to be had.

Baptism forgives all your past sins and provides access to the Father in prayer ... so you can ask forgiveness for any sin you may commit in the future.

You can always stay clean enough to be in the presence of God.

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