

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

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25

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## IS THE CHURCH IMPORTANT?

Jefferson David Tant

Is God's church important? Does it have any significant place in our lives, or is it just something concerning which we have a choice—to be a part of it, or do our own thing?

It is pretty obvious that many in the “Christian” world today see no real value in being a part of the church. They reason that they can worship God just as well in their home or out in the woods. And while it certainly is true that we can worship God anywhere we are, is there no significance in being an active member of the church—the spiritual body of Christ?

Let us consider some passages from God's Word that will answer the question for us.

The first passage to consider is Christ's statement in **Matthew 16:13-18**: *“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ‘I also say to you that you are Peter, **and upon this rock I will build My church**; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.’”*

In this conversation, Christ is making sure his disciples understand His true identity, and when they show they understand that He is the Son of God, Jesus said *“upon this rock (this foundation) I will build My church.”* Now, if their understanding was important enough for Christ to establish His church, it should be obvious that there is

something important attached to Christ's church. So, just what is the church? It is the spiritual body of Christ. We note in **Ephesians 1:22-23** that God *“... put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

Note the comparison made in **Ephesians 5:23**: *“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”* We would think it absurd for a husband to say, “Yes, I have a wife, but I don't have to live with her. I've built a cabin out in the woods where I live.” I don't think we would describe that as a true marriage. But some say, “Yes, I'm married to Christ, but I don't have to be a part of His church, His body. I can worship God just as well out in the woods or sitting at home.”

If the church is insignificant, how do we get around the statement the apostle Paul made to the elders of the church at Ephesus: *“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”* (**Acts 20:28**) If the church was so important that Christ was willing to undergo death by a cruel crucifixion for it, who is man to say that church participation is not essential?

Now, some might say, “Oh, I'm a member of a church, but I don't think I have to attend every service. I go from time to time, and especially on Easter and at Christmastime.”

To counter that thinking, consider the message God has given us in **Hebrews 10:23-27**: *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate*

*one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.”*

What did the inspired writer just say? That we sin if we forsake the assembling together. Evidently some in the first century were having the same attitude that some have now in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century, and the writer said they were sinning when they forsook their assemblies.

This “forsaking” is quite common today. As my wife and I drive some miles to meet with the church each Sunday, we pass by multitudes of cars parked in front of houses along the way. These cars are in the same place when we return. I am confident that many of those who live in those houses would claim they are Christians. But sadly, they are Christians in name only.

How often were Christians supposed to meet in those early years? *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the **first day of every week** each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come” (I Corinthians 16:1-2).*

Other activities for their weekly meetings included singing songs of praise, partaking of the Lord’s Supper, teaching the Word of God, praying and encouraging one another.

Before closing, there is another point to consider. If you are a member of a church, is it the same church that is described in the New Testament? There are, by some estimates, some 42,000 different churches or denominations that exist today. They all teach differing doctrines and observe differing practices. This is not what the Bible teaches.

Consider **Ephesians 4:4-6**: *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”*

There is *“one body,”* which is **the** church, and not 42,000 different bodies, all teaching differing doctrines. *“One baptism,”* which according to the Bible is an immersion in water, and thus not four baptisms—

sprinkling water, pouring water, sprinkling rose petals, or immersion, or even as some denominations do—refusing to baptize. Who are we to cancel one of God’s commands? Has God changed his mind, or has Satan deceived those who have done this?

Dear Readers, your soul’s salvation is the most vital aspect of your life on this earth. You need to consider what your pastor or church believes and practices, and compare that with what the Bible teaches. The apostle Paul commended the people of the city of Berea for what they were doing after hearing him preach. *“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11)*

They didn’t accept Paul’s preaching just because it may have sounded good, but they checked it out!

Remember that Satan, the great deceiver, has his own preachers. *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.” (II Corinthians 11:13-15)*

## HOW AUTHORITATIVE IS GOD’S WORD?

**Jim Stauffer**

The source of my concern and thus this article is a conversation I recently had with a very kind, gentle, considerate lady who says she is a Christian. In that conversation she stated the position of the congregation with which she worships toward the subject of homosexuality. The position she claimed was that while homosexuality is obviously not approved by God, her congregation feels they deserve our love and should not be excluded from the church.

The immediate question is who determines membership in the Lord’s church. The church Jesus died to purchase (**Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28**) is described as His body (**Eph. 1:22,23**). There can be no argument that the love of the souls of all men is how a child of God should feel. That is how God feels in sending His son to die for all men (**John 3:16**). However, that love has not caused God and Christ to save anyone, the homosexual included, in his sin.

When a person becomes a Christian he becomes a follower of Christ. He then is expected to walk in the footsteps of Jesus (**Eph. 5:1,2; 1 Peter 2:21-24**). The very essence of Christianity is becoming like Christ. It is the result of being born again (**John 3:3-5**) and being made in the likeness of God (**Eph. 4:22-24**). That tells us clearly that the sinner has to repent and change his conduct to become like God and indeed become a Christian, a disciple of Christ.

There is a clear and obvious reason one becomes a Christian. It is to be saved from his sins. Just as surely as Scripture relates the gracious action of God and Christ on the cross of Calvary as a sacrifice for the sins of man, it also communicates the definitive nature of judgment for the purpose of determining the faithful obedience of mankind (**John 5:28,29; 2 Cor. 5:10**). When the Scripture refers to the resurrection of life for those who have done good things in life it is speaking of doing those things God determines are good. We as His children are to obey Him, not alter His message of good and evil. Sin is evil and must be corrected and forgiven by the blood of Christ for one to become a Christian. A person practicing sin such as homosexuality or any sin must repent and change to become a child of God and thus be added to the saved (**Acts 2:38-47**).

One of the difficulties the Christian must suffer is the social ostracism that can come from being a child of God. **1 John 3:1** expresses joy over the great love God has bestowed upon us by accepting us as His children. It follows that by pointing out how the world rejects us because we are not like them. There is no reason for the world to reject one who claims to be the child of God if that person does not reject the sin that God does (**see 1 Cor. 6:9-11**).

Finally, let us be sure we understand the Christian is merely a sinner who has repented of his sinful life and turned to God for salvation. As Scripture teaches, he has believed in God and Christ, repented of his sins, confessed Jesus as Lord and been baptized into Christ putting to death the old man of sin and put on Christ (**Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9,10; Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:27**).

We ask your consideration of these points and if we are correct you should acknowledge it in your beliefs and conduct. If we are incorrect, please call that to our attention in order for us to be right in His sight.

## ***All Authority Has Been Given...***

Jesus said: "*All authority has been given unto me in heaven and earth...*" (**Matthew 28:18**). That authority was given to Him by the Father. The Father declared Jesus to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead (**Romans 1:4**). As creator and resurrected Lord, Jesus claims all authority in heaven and earth.

That is the reason that the apostles were sent into the world to make disciples of all the nations (**Matthew 28:19**). Disciples learn from their Master and follow their Master in reverent admiration and obedience. All people of all lands, races and tongues are under the authority of Christ.

Yet, only believing disciples yield to His authority. That obedience is seen as each submits, allowing himself to be baptized, immersed in the name of God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit).

This is a beginning point that continues through life as the Lord's servants will be "*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...*" (**Matthew 28:20**). The blessing is in the sanctified person we become and the promise that Jesus is with us always. Have you fully submitted to the authority of Jesus?

***Don Bunting***

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***We believe in worshiping and serving the Lord as He has instructed in His word.***

***Is salvation equal to redemption which is achieved through forgiveness of sin?***

***Sin separates us from God - Isaiah 59:1,2.***

***In order to be redeemed or saved, our sins must be forgiven, For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)***

**Psa. 1:1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

## HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study  
Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship  
Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship  
Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

**Visitors welcome**

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Jim Stauffer

Sunday Sermon:

**Responsible Love**



## **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10