

We live in a technological age quite different than it was a hundred years ago, yet there is one question that lingered in the minds of many then and still exists today. The question is “What Church Do I Join?” There are so many churches around which one should I join? Men and women realize the need to be saved and are seeking a place to find salvation. People are still seeking the answer to that question, “What church do I join?”

While this may be a controversial matter, I ask that you weigh what is said today against the Bible, and if there are differences I hope you will study the matter and let me know if I am teaching error. Be like the noble Bereans in Acts 17. *Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

One matter that makes this a difficult question to answer is the sheer number of churches from which one can choose. This number is staggering. Satan has continued to work during the past hundred years is spreading division so that today we have over 30,000 denominations in the United States alone. In 2017 Howard Kramer wrote an article entitled HOW MANY CHURCHES AND DENOMINATIONS ARE THERE IN AMERICA AND THE WORLD? In that article he said,

“Protestant Christianity makes up the bulk of different denominations, counting 9,000 mainstream and 22,000 independent for a total of 31,000. For true denominations involving multiple churches under common leadership, the number is almost certainly less than two thousand. Major ones, with over a million members, probably less than five hundred.”

Satan wants people to be so hopefully confused that they throw up their hands in discuss and their souls are damned on the Day of Judgment. I agree that this can be a confusing task because in every organization there are many good people and commendable features and good things taught, but then there are a few that gives you trouble and you have a hard time accepting.

Let me suggest that when it comes to joining a church, **why not join them all?** We have people that join different social clubs or business organizations at the same time. For instance a person might be a member of the Rotary Club and Lions Club at the same time with no conflicting interest. So why not become a member of several churches.

Where do we get the idea that we should join just one church? Would you not be a better person by being members of several churches? Where do you draw the line? Why not join them all?

QUESTION: Where did God ever authorize joining a church? I have never asked nor do I ever intend to ask any man to join any church. I have never joined a church nor do I expect any of you to join a church. Now I am not claiming that I am not a member of the church – but I am claiming that I did not “*join*” the church. Let me say that God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit or any inspired man ever suggested or asked or admonished anybody to “*join the church.*” There is not a single hint anywhere between Genesis and Revelation where anything is mentioned about “*joining a church.*” Now in view of our religious climate today this may seem to be a strange statement, but it is a true statement. Where is the passage that says “*join the church*” or more broadly “*join the church of your choice.*” Where is it?

QUESTION: Would you rather join a denomination or be added to the church? This is where we begin to discuss what we mean by not joining a church but being added to “*the church.*” Let us make a distinction between a denomination and the church you read about in your new testaments that Jesus promised to build. No where do you read about denominations in your Bibles. There is a close hint of such in 1 Corinthians 1 where people wanted to be followers of men such as Paul, or Peter, or Apollos; but Paul put a stop to that kind of thinking. Notice what he said in verse 13, but first let us read verse 10. ***1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*** Let us understand that denominations are divisive – they divide. Our money is divided into different values. We have a \$5, \$10, \$20 etc. and we say that they are different denominations. Verse 10 Paul says that there should be no division among you. Then he adds (13) ***Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?***

QUESTION: Is the church you read about in your Bibles a denomination? Is the church Jesus promised to build and the church that he purchased with his blood a denomination? If it is, then which one is it? Are you willing to take a name of one denomination founded by man slap that name on the church of our Lord and say this is the one that Jesus built? Is there a church that you can join today that is the same church that you read about in Acts 2:47 that people were being added to by the Lord? If so, which one is it?

Denominations are of relatively modern origin. They are not found in ancient history but in relatively modern history. When we read the Bible in the privacy of our homes, and read about the church, no one thinks they are reading about some denomination. Bro. N. B. Hardeman co-founder of Freed-Hardeman University said, “*You can take the Bible and memorize it from lid to lid and you would be no wiser about denominationalism than at the beginning.*” Why is that; because the Bible says not a word about them? That should say something to you.

Are there people today practicing denominational doctrines and calling themselves denominational names that are not found in the scriptures? If they are following the word of God, then they will not be using terminology not found in the word of God. ***1 Peter 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God;...***

Now let’s imagine I am a news reporter and heard about the great event that happened in Jerusalem where some 3000 people were baptized. So I look up some of those people for an interview and we ask them, “*Which denomination did you just join? I’d like to know what denomination you became a member?*” Those people looked stunned as they had no clue what was just asked. So I begin rattling off some names of churches that we are familiar with and they still are in a fog as to what I’m talking about. They said all that they know is that there was a man of divine origin who lived in the flesh and bled and died on a Calvary tree. We believe that he is the son of God and we repented of the wrong in our lives and we were baptized for the remission of our sins and he added us to his church. That is the only church that I know anything about.

Today, as we study with people, they need to understand that we are not asking them to leave one denomination to join another denomination called the “Church of Christ.” What we are asking people to do is leave a man made institution and become a member of the church build by Jesus the Christ; the church of Christ that you read about in your NT. A person does not join the church. A person is added to it at precisely the same time that a person is saved by the blood of Christ through baptism. Once you do that and someone asks you of which church you are a member; you tell them that you are a member of the Lord’s church.

Now most have the wrong perception of the church of Christ and this gives us an opportunity to educate our neighbors, co-workers and friends as to what the church of Christ really is. Let them know that we are not saying our

denomination is better than your denomination and that is the Church of Christ denomination. I have never believed that nor have I ever preached that.

But there is a church that Jesus actually did build. *Matthew 16:18 ... and upon this rock I will build my church; ...* Did Jesus do that? And if he did, when did he do it and if he did what would be wrong with making reference to that church being His church or the church that belongs to Christ or the church of Christ? The ecclesia (the church) is the called out that Christ bought with his own blood.

What if I were to lay my glasses on the pulpit and say, “*Upon this pulpit I will lay my glasses, and after services you can come up here and take the glasses of your choice,*” you would be confused as you come up here because there is no choice. There is only one pair of glasses up here. When Jesus said upon this rock I will build my church, he did just that; He built only one.

If you were to ask members of various denominations if you had to be a member of their denomination to be saved, many if not most, will tell you no; you can be saved and not be a member of their denomination. Now if I can be saved from sin and live an eternal life in heaven without being a member of a denomination, then what reason is there then for the existence of that denomination.

QUESTION: Must I be a member of the church of Christ in order to be saved? Now to answer that question, we must first make sure that the people understand that we are not saying that of all the denominations that exist, we are the only one that counts. I am not saying that nor will I ever say that for one denomination is just as good as another.

Let me use an illustration. God located the life of a fish and put that location in water. Now if that fish wants to enjoy that life, he has to be in the realm where God designated that life to be located. Where did God design the realm for fish to live: in the location of water and not outside of water. *Act 2:47 ... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* Where did God designate that men would be saved: in the realm of the church bought by the blood of his son Jesus Christ and not outside of the church.

Now let's go from the generic to the specific. Does one have to be a member of the church of Christ to be saved? *Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that*

doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Now according to the words of Jesus, will everyone that calls him Lord go to heaven? Now if you are honest with the scriptures, your response will be no; not everyone that calls Jesus Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. Now I think you will agree that Jesus is the most qualified person to answer the question of who will be going to heaven? Now Jesus answers that question in the latter part of v21 and that is those who **do the will of the Father in heaven.** So we conclude that the only ones going to heaven are those who do the will of the Father which is in heaven. Now what is that will?

Let's go to the book of Ephesians and look at the three passages of scripture. *Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.* This verse tells us that Christ is the savior of the body. When Jesus comes again, he is coming for the body. Just like that fish has to be inside that fish bowl to live; one has to be in the body to be saved. Now if a person is not part of the body is he saved? Does this person need to be in the body of Christ in order to be saved? Paul complements this point in *2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

Next we learn from Eph 4:4 that there is only one body. Which one is it? It's the one that you read about in your NT and which follows the NT pattern. Now what if a person is in some spiritual body, but it's not the one body that Jesus will save – is he saved? A person has to be in the body in order to be saved just like the fish has to be inside the water.

So what is this body? *Ephesians 1:22-23 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, (23) Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* We learn from that passage that the church is the body. The same thought is also found in the letter of Colossians. *Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.* Now if a man needs to be in the body of Christ in order to be saved and the body is the church, then the conclusion is that that he needs to be in the church of Christ in order to be saved; for the body is the church. We do no disservice to scripture to substitute the word church for body in Eph 5:23 for the body is the church.

Now I have been part of the family of Loyd and Dot Black for over seventy years. Never was there a day when I joined that family. I was born into that family just as each of you was born into your family. So how do you become a member of the family body of Christ, you are born into it. **John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

A little girl was going to church services one day with her daddy while her mother went to a different denomination. The little girl said, "Does God always do things for the best?" The daddy said yes, God always does things for the best. Then the little girl said, "Then why didn't God just make one church so you mommy and me could all go to church together?" The answer to that question is "He did."

Are you part of the body of Christ? If not, why to become one today?

Invitation

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Welcome