

## Are you the people of God? Or are you not?

**Matthew 18:20** For **where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.**

A "congregation" is a call to leave their homes and lives to meet for God's purposes. The word "Church" comes from two words in Greek, "call" and "out, or out of" and is used outside the Bible in classical Greek to call and gather all the townspeople for some purpose. So, of course, if a person is a member of God's spiritual church, he meets for the purposes and work that God wants to give them.

### Salvation is to be part of the Redeemed

**Matthew 10:32** Whosoever **therefore shall confess me before men**, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. **33** But whosoever shall deny me before men, **him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.** **Romans 10:9** That **if thou shalt confess** with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

What these two verses teach is that faith without a public profession is not enough to save one. We are forced to publicly confess Christ. This is done by water baptism in a local church (a local community of organized brethren). We confess this salvation relationship by saying it publicly, and for every week we meet with the redeemed at a nearby church weekly. We are not saved by works, but true faith shows by confession and acknowledging Christ.

We must attend and participate in a good local church because by doing so it is to recognize that we are part of a special group called "the redeemed." To be a visitor or a listener in the church is not to associate with her. We can define being saved as spiritually being part of this group. No human being would live in heaven without being clearly identified as "a redeemed." Do you want to be part of this group? To answer "No" is to be part of the other group, the damned who will suffer in hell forever. Identification with the redeemed for being an active member of their group is the strongest profession. To identify with them and live as the example of Christ.

### Who do you get together with?

**2 Timothy 2:22** Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, **with them that**

**call on the Lord out of a pure heart.** God commands us to meet in a local church (like those in the New Testament) to devote effort and time to fulfilling God's purposes. This is to pray, preach and teach the word of God, to sing, and to worship and praise God. Typically all this is seen in a normal service of a good church. We must also unite with the evangelism and prayer efforts of such a church. Meeting will not save you, but if saved you go.

### What do you declare by your actions?

As we saw in the section on the left in **Matthew 10:32-33** and **Romans 10:9**, salvation is actually a spiritual union with Christ, in which Christ puts us in "the body of Christ," as part of the redeemed. According to **Romans 10:9**, true faith will make it public. Saving faith is always public. This public confession for your life must be very visible, and the most consistent way is to identify (be a participating member) is with a local church, and to participate fully and with joy and encouragement in it. But what do you declare when (1) you do not attend, or (2) you are not a happy and joyful participant of a local church?

The integration and incorporation of the believer into a local church (not a perfect church, but one confessing Christ and the essential and biblical doctrines) is how we confess our union with Christ. If the church is wrong, find another, or be an instrument to start a new one, but the lack of identifying with God's people on earth, in its New Testament form (a local church) is simply dangerous. No true believer will miss being a member of a church. **Acts 20:7** And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. The gathering on the first day of the week for the Lord's Supper, preaching, etc. was the custom of the Church.

### It is the House of Our Father

**Hebrews 10:23** Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) **24** And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: **25** **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,** as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

## "Church" is practicing for Heaven

**It's strange** because people want to go to heaven and not go to hell, **but they don't want to practice the same spiritual things they will be doing in heaven when they get there.** That is, many do not want to go to hell, and if one threatens them with hell if they do not do this or the other, **they do it with much resistance to participate with such a thing only until they think they have won heaven again, and then they stop attending.** **They do not understand that the services and activities of the church are the preparation for their heavenly life. What they do in the local church is preparation for living eternity with God.**

### The Worship of God

The concept of "worship" is an appreciation (verbal or of mind and spirit) about who God is, and how God is in his moral character. **John 4:23** But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. **24** God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

**How do we worship God?** This matter is difficult to define very well, but this worship (or appreciation) of God comes from the result of a very deep meditation on a particular aspect of God, in something that God Himself has revealed about himself. Worship flows from the Holy Scriptures because the source of information about God has to be inspired, and only the Bible is inspired. This is why we preach the Bible in services. It also indicates that it has to be deep, involving time and effort to understand it at first, and then exposition of it as well. This necessitates reading and meditating on the Word for a long time. Doctrine must be taught to be remembered and here the songs and hymns are brief summaries of these deep meditations. **Matthew 4:10** Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.** In the church, we must have a sufficient time to reflect on God. This process is incomplete and defective if the person comes in the middle of a cult. It is insufficient if the teaching is very short or if it is not well explained with Scripture and exposition.

## The Praise of God

The concept of "praise" focuses on a recognition of the character of God, **as this character of God has directly touched the life of the person who is praising God** (or other Christians). It is always a mixture of the worship of God as a background, and normally a personal experience in which the moral character of God has been demonstrated in a specific way, a specific example. Worship is directly the character of God, and praise is an example of God's character in today's life.

### The Sacrifices: Singing and Joy

Singing spiritual songs and hymns is a form of worship and praise. The songs have to portray or teach doctrine. Singing the Christian beliefs is a way in which we express our agreement with the doctrines and hopes they contain. Here worldly songs and songs do not work because it only moves emotions without a basis in doctrine or examples of spiritual principles in our lives. They have to have good underlying doctrine to serve us well.

### The Sacrifices: Tithes and Offerings

Each local church must be dedicated to exist in the way God directed them, and then they must do the work of God in interceding for the unsaved and other Christians, and also to evangelize the unsaved in their area. All this is not done without money, and the way God directs us is to receive offerings and tithes to financially support God's work.

### The Sacrifices: Prayer

God commands us to carry the burdens of one another (**Galatians 6:2**). To fulfill this commandment with our brethren, one needs to have a relationship with these other Christians in the local assembly, and this time of meeting and living together is before, during, and after the services on Sundays (and Wednesdays and the other times of special meetings). This is the form given in the New Testament.

### It is a community of Perfect Love (Fraternal love)

There are some Christians who say they don't need the church. Their way of life is (1) never to go to church, or (2) to visit only occasionally, or (3) not to enter into any of the social activities, or ministries of the local church. **1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one**

**another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.** The Apostle John begins chapter 4 with "How we identify the spirit of the antichrist." **An antichrist is someone who is against or the opposite of Christ.** John then uses the criterion of love. Whoever loves his brother in Christ is of Christ, and he who does not love is of the antichrist. The church is much more than just a room where you learn doctrine. It is a meeting where little by little you know your brethren and live with them. He who cannot love his brother in the church here, then, John qualifies such a person as **"he has not known God,"** that is, he is not saved. **1 John 4:21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.**

### Serving our Brethren

**Matthew 25:40** *And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* **45** *Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

In the passage of **Matthew 25:31-46**, Jesus himself says that God is going to separate people in the great court at the end of the Revelation based on how they have served each other, their brothers in Christ. You cannot despise and hate your brothers in Christ (because those who do not attend and commune with them in the church, is to hate them). Assisting church (a good work) does not save you, but rather, being saved the person wants to attend and participate in church. God uses your attitude and actions towards your brothers as the indicator of your salvation or the insincerity of your vows with Christ.

### Celestial robes: Good works

**Revelation 16:15** *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

Our labors for Christ here on earth will be our glory or shame in heaven. Good works are part of salvation, but good works won't procure salvation, rather they provide us with rewards once we are there.

# Why do I Attend Church?

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**Exodus 25:8** *And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.* **Ephesians 2:22** *In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

The saved are *"the people of God."* In the O.T., God called a people to be His own, and he made a dwelling within them (the tabernacle, and then the temple). But the identification or symbolism of this is that God was dwelling within their lives.

**Romans 8:9** *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* That is, salvation is very centered on this point, that we are the saved, and we are the abode of God. God dwells within us.

**Matthew 1:23...** *and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.* The idea is not just "with us", as next to us, but "in us." "God in us, or within us as individuals and or as a group.