

STEP BY STEP

Part Three in a Series of Eight



3. Salvation And The Church

THE CHURCH

'caring for PEOPLE for PEOPLE matter to God' Romans 5:8

YES, TO JESUS NO, TO CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

When someone becomes a Christian they have been added to the church of Christ on earth. No doubt there will be times when a Christian can truly benefit from the fellowship of their brothers and sisters in Christ. That is certainly part of the reason why God added them to His church.

In a world where there are many who would wish to say 'yes' to Jesus but 'no' to the church, we ask the question what is **God's view** of the church. Anachronism or answer to man's needs, addendum or essential aspect of the eternal plan of God.

The common religious view is that one should become a Christian and then join the church of your choice. It may surprise you to know that the Bible **nowhere** speaks of your joining the church. Nor does it speak anywhere of **choosing** a church to suit your own tastes. In fact, the New Testament knows of only **one church** and a person does not join it at all but God adds them to it.

No one who truly studies the New Testament can come away with the idea that God regards the church as unimportant. Nor can we truly study the teachings of Jesus and conclude that Jesus regarded the church as an optional extra. The church is the eternal plan of God to accomplish His will on earth and bring many to heaven.

1. Acts 20:28 'Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.'

God thought so highly of the church that He was prepared to pay the cost of the blood of His Son to establish the church. Note how God views the church as a blood bought possession.

2. 1 Peter 1:18-19 'For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.'

Note that Peter uses exactly the same language, 'redeemed by the blood of Christ' to speak of those who are redeemed from futility to live for God. The church are simply the fellowship of the redeemed.

3. Ephesians 5:25-27 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.'

Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. Note that Paul is saying that Jesus died for the church. The church is the bride of Christ, **Ephesians 5:32** and Jesus died in order to sanctify the church as a pure bride for Himself.

No closer union between Christ and the church could be portrayed than this portrayal. Jesus died to redeem the church, to sanctify the church, to nourish and cherish the church. **Ephesians 5:29**, to save the church, **Ephesians 5:23**.

HE CHOSE TO ADD US TO HIS CHURCH

4. Please Read Acts 2:41-47

As those who first heard the gospel were baptized and cleansed from their sin in the blood of Christ, they were added by God to the church, which is the fellowship of the saved.

We did not choose to **join**. He chose to **add** us. It is part of His loving concern for our spiritual welfare that He placed us in the church of our Redeemer.

IN CHRIST, IN THE CHURCH

A theme in the writings of Paul is that of being 'in Christ'. In your reading of Paul, make a special note of where Paul uses this phrase.

HOW DOES ONE GET 'IN CHRIST', WHAT DOES ONE GET 'IN CHRIST'?

These questions are fruitful areas of study for you. We will answer some of these questions in the following passages of Scripture.

A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH OTHER

5. Colossians 1:18 'And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.'

We note that the church is referred to as the Body of Christ. This speaks of the integral connection between Christ and the church and His absolute reign over the church. The church has only one Head and in this analogy we see the truth that the Head has only one body. Please Read Ephesians 4:1-5.

6. Ephesians 1:22-23 'And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.'

We see that this is an integral part of the teaching of the apostle Paul that the relationship between Christ and the church is that of the Head to the body. Note how this relates to the biblical teaching of being 'in Christ'.

If someone is in the church, they are in the body of Christ, hence they are in Christ. Truly to be in Christ is to be in the church, and to be truly in the church is to be in Christ.

7. Please Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

We see that being in the church, the body of Christ, puts Christians into a special relationship with Jesus the Head. Just as the body obeys and responds to every command of the head, so does the church of its Head.

Further, being part of the body puts Christians into a special relationship with one another. Just as each part of the human body would exercise care and work in concert with each other part, so also in the church of Christ.

Further each part of the body is important for different bodily functions. The hand is just as important as the foot, or the eyes, or the ears. This emphasizes that each member of the church has a function within the body, and hence is important to the Head and to each other part of the body.

Some Christians within the church may not know what their part is yet. But Christians have many talents and qualities, which will make them indispensable to the body of Christ.

BLESSINGS IN THE CHURCH

8. Ephesians 2:13 'But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.'

Those who are in Christ have been brought near to God through the blood of Christ. The 'in Christ' people are in the church. It follows that in the church we are brought near to God.

9. Please Read Ephesians 2:17-22

Another figure is used in this passage whereby the church is likened to a great building, or temple of God.

Note that Paul is not saying that the building is the church. The church is a fellowship of redeemed people, not a building.

Rather he is using a metaphor or parable here and saying the church is like a building. Christians are **'built into it'**. i.e. They are an integral part of God's building. There are no ornamental additions, but each is an integral part of the structure.

Again notice the interrelation between a Christian as a part of the structure and the Chief Cornerstone, and also to the apostles who laid the foundation, and of course to every other part of the building.

BLESSINGS IN THE CHURCH

The relevance and importance of the church may be seen in a study of **the book of Ephesians**, which has the church in the eternal plan of God as a major theme of the Book. The blessings of being part of the worldwide family of God, the church of Christ are manifold.

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS ONLY FOUND IN CHRIST

10. Ephesians 1:3 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing **in Christ.**'

Where are all spiritual blessings to be found? They are to be found in Christ, which as we have seen means that they are found in the church.

WHAT WOULD THESE INCLUDE?

The grace of God, the love of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the hope of heaven, the peace that passes understanding, etc. These are available **only** to those in Christ.

11. Ephesians 1:22-23 'And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.'

Fullness in Christ is found in Him which means in the church. The fullness of the blessings experienced through being in intimate relationship with the Christ is found in the church.

Colossians 2:9-10 'For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.'

12. Hebrews 12:22-23 'But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.'

The writer speaks of the greatness of the church using a number of analogies, displaying how much more glorious, how much greater is the new covenant redemption than the old covenant.

The church is referred to as Mount Zion (**the figurative centre of the government of God**), the City of the Living God (**God's habitation and hence the habitation of the people of God**), Heavenly Jerusalem (**not just the physical city which is subject to destruction and decay but to the heavenly city of which we have become citizens**), to a glorious assembly of saints (**just men made perfect**) and angels, the location of God the great Judge, and into the presence of the sprinkled blood of the covenant.

13. Please Read Revelation 21:1-4, Revelation 21:9-11, Revelation 21:22-27

In the beautiful imagery of the Revelation of John we see the holy city, New Jerusalem, which John identifies as the bride of Christ. In that city there is comfort and consolation, for God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

In that city, truly death shall be no more for physical death is merely a passing from this life into eternity with Him, and in that city there is intimate fellowship with God, who is our Light. And all those who are citizens have their names inscribed in the Lamb's book of life.

What a privilege it is to belong to the church or our Lord!

INTO CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

SAME PROCESS PUTS US INTO BOTH CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Mark 16:15-16 belief + baptism = salvation

Galatians 3:26-27 belief + baptism = puts one into Christ

Acts 2:38,41,47 belief + baptism = puts one into the church.

CONCLUSION

The concepts of being **in Christ**, being in the church and being saved from sin are inseparable in the Word of God. There is no reason for us to want to separate what God has joined together.

We might say what God has joined together let no man put asunder. God has placed Christians in the church in order that they might find the support and help they need in living the Christian life.

It gives Christians a focus for their Christian service; it gives them encouragement in their Christian worship, and gives them direction for their Christian life.

Oh that Christians could learn to love the church as much as God did in giving His Son to establish it, or as much as Christ did in giving His life to bring Christians into it.

EVALUATION SHEET

Please go ahead and fill in the evaluation sheet attached.

CONTACT DETAILS

Email: info@the-scriptures.co.uk

This study was written by © Alastair Ferrie

EVALUATION SHEET

Step by Step Lesson 3

(Please type or write your answers within the lines provided)

Name:

Home Address or Email address:

QUESTIONS:

(Please reply with your answers via e-mail or a separate sheet of paper.)

Think about and write down how important the church is to God, look over the scripture references mentioned above. Also think how the church has many parts but each one is vitally important to God.

Is it possible for a person to say 'yes' to Jesus but 'no' to church according to your studies?

SENDING YOUR ANSWERS

Once we have received your evaluation sheet we will send you the **next study** in the series.

Please return your completed evaluation sheet as an email attachment to info@the-scriptures.co.uk