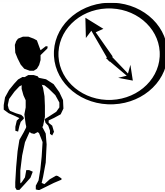


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### Time of Assembly



#### Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.  
Worship 10:00 a.m.  
(every other week)

Worship 5:00 p.m.

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

## Is the Church Important?

By 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 understood 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 are men 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 had the same attitude that some have now in the 21st 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.

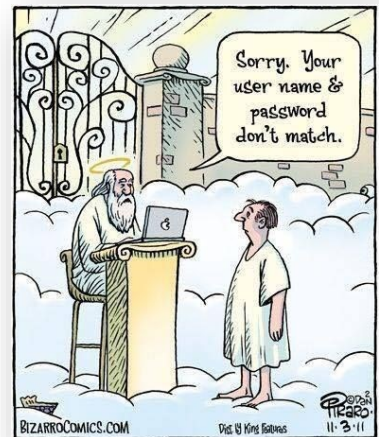
Consider Ephesians 4:4-6: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”

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).



## The Salvation Army

By David Weaks

I wonder how many people know that the Salvation Army is a church. The only time you see them is at Christmas time when the red kettles and bell ringers show up at entrances to shopping malls. How many times have people tossed money into the kettle, accepted the cheery "God bless you!" from the bell ringer, and felt like they have helped a worthy charity? People need to realize that the Salvation Army is not a charity, it is a religion.

The Salvation Army was founded by an English Methodist preacher named William Booth in 1878. Originally, Booth founded the East London Christian Mission in 1865 and later changed the name of the group to the Salvation Army. According to their literature, the mission of the Salvation Army is two-fold, charity and evangelism: "...designed to operate as a religious and charitable corporation' whose paramount purpose is to lead men and women into a proper relationship with God" (What Is the Salvation Army?, pgs. 8-9).

The Salvation Army is organized, as its name implies, as if it were a military organization. The headquarters is in London, England, and its head is called the "General," and he has a Chief of Staff who administers his orders to the "Army." Throughout the world, the Salvation Army is divided into territories, with each territory being overseen by Lieutenant-Commissioners. In the United States, there is a National Commander based in New York (What Is The Salvation Army?, p. 10). The Bible teaches: That churches of Christ are organized with "saints, bishops, and deacons" (Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

The Salvation Army has a creed book called: The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine, which outlines eleven articles of faith that all "officers" of all ranks must embrace and teach. In doctrine, the Salvation Army is Calvinistic, teaching that a direct operation of the Holy Spirit is necessary to bring the elect to faith (Handbook of Doctrine, p. 185). Further, the Salvation Army teaches that one is saved by grace alone (ibid, p. 185, 189-191), and baptism is not necessary (ibid, p. 186). The church also emphasizes Calvin's doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity. Ironically, it is clear from their doctrinal writing and their actions that the Salvation Army believes good works are necessary. Otherwise, they wouldn't place such a premium on social charity. The Bible teaches: Salvation is by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), but salvation also depends upon obedience to the gospel of Christ (Hebrews 5:8-9). A man is justified by works of obedience and not by faith only (James 2:24). Faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

Another element of the Salvation Army is its music. We are all familiar with images of the Salvation Army brass band in movies and television which depict Christmas

scenes. The Salvation Army emphasizes the importance of instrumental music in their various services: "music plays an important part in Salvation Army religious work . . . . It is symbolic of the cheerful quality of Salvation Army religion" (What Is the Salvation Army?, p. 25). Along with Instrumental music in worship, women preachers have been commonplace since the beginning of the Salvation Army. William Booth's wife, Catherine, was the first and most vigorous advocate of women's ministry.

The Bible teaches: That worship is important and must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Only vocal music alone is acceptable in worship to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). The Bible also teaches that public preaching and teaching is not permitted as a work for women (I Corinthians 14:34; I Timothy 2:11-12).

Can a Christian contribute to the Salvation Army? This is a legitimate question that deserves and needs an answer. Doubtless, many people think of the Salvation Army as nothing more than a charitable outlet, much like Goodwill Industries. However, we need to keep in mind that the Salvation Army is a religious movement that happens to have a public charitable arm. It is funded by donations from strangers, as well as government donations, rather than just by the first day of the week contributions of members (I Corinthians 16:1-2). Its doctrines and worship practices are false (Galatians 1:6-9). Therefore, you need to realize that any money that you into the Salvation Army kettle is funding a man-made religion with doctrines and practices that are different than those things taught in the New Testament. Christians are not permitted to bid Godspeed to false teachers (II John 9-10). We are not allowed to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but should rather expose them (Ephesians 5:11).

Resist the urge to put money in the pot of a bell ringer. Better yet, ask the ringer to study the Bible with you. Chances are he knows little about the Bible or his church.



Thanks to Dad Hongsvold (See Genesis 3)

01-01-2000

OUR RESOLUTION LAST YEAR COULD HAVE BEEN  
"LESS FRUIT", BUT NO ... WE WENT WITH  
"TRUST PEOPLE MORE"