

The Church

Ephesians 1:22-23

Introduction: What church should a man join? Why do so many "good" people not join any? Consider all the religious organizations today known as churches competing for membership. How can an unbiased person determine which to attend? People are taught they can be saved out of the church. Then why should anyone join any church?

I. The Church - What is it?

A. Defined - Eph. 1:22-23; Spiritual realm - body of Christ - over which Jesus reigns as head - composed of all the saved - all who have been born again.

B. Two applications:

1. General assembly; Ekklesia; "universal" (Matt. 16:18).

2. Local congregation; geographically limited (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1).

C. Denominations are not in the bible. Denominations would have you believe they are a group within the body.

D. Is the church a denomination (1 Cor. 12:27)? Of all the religious organizations today, which could be the true Church?

E. Matt. 16:18; "Upon this rock - my church." Is this a denomination?

F. Eph. 5:25; What denomination was that?

G. Acts 2:47; "Those that were saved," were added to which denomination? It's impossible to apply any verse to a denomination!

II. The Church - How many?

A. *The body* (1 Cor. 12:12); "so also is Christ." "Many members but one body" (1 Cor. 12:20). "One body" (Eph. 4:4). "Head even Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

Illustration:

1. Take all of the various bodies - organized under different heads. One body with hundreds of heads - Monster! Are we one under this arrangement? (Remember there are no groups in the body!)

2. "We are all one, under one head." As husband is head (Eph. 5:23).

B. *The Vine* (John 15:1-6); "I am the vine - ye are the branches." It is between Christ and Christians. Remember a grape vine has the same kind, origin and fruit.

1. If it represents denominations: differing in origin, doctrine & practice (many vines).

2. "Abide in me" (John 15:4). Abide in the vine (John 15:5), not in the branches (John 15:6).

3. If a denomination is a branch and it abides not in the whole (which it can't), it will be burned up with the individuals in it!

C. *The fold* (John 10:16) "One fold - one shepherd." The Gentiles are fellow heirs (Eph. 3:6). All became one - one fold, one shepherd - one Church (Gal. 3:27).

D. *The family* (Eph. 3:15). "The whole family in heaven and on earth." In both places at one time. One father - one family. Some die - united on earth, reunited in heaven (Heb. 12:22-23).

III. The Church - Who are members of it?

A. You can not join the church. The Lord adds you to his Church upon baptism (Acts 2:38, 47)! (Most religious organizations don't baptize for salvation; therefore, none of them are in the Lord's Church!)

B. Spiritual birth (John 1:12-13; 3:3-5), "not of the will of man - but of God."

C. The Lord Adds to the Church. "Baptized into the one body" (1 Cor. 12:12-13).

Conclusion: Were you baptized into the one body or some other body?