

The New Testament Church #3

“How Do We Get Into the Church?”

Introduction; Membership has privileges.

A. This is something we hear from time to time

1. We hear it when someone is trying to sell us a membership in something. It may be Sam's Club or a stockbroker or a resort or many other things.
2. The idea is that a group of folks pool their money in some kind of club and they have certain advantages that most do not have.
3. Sometimes this is true. Sometimes it is just hype. We have to really think about what we are becoming a member of.
4. Is it really something we need or want to do? Does it really have things we need? Will we use it enough to make the cost worth it?
5. Some do very well in membership clubs and so forth. Others just waste their money. Many join and just let their membership expire. They consider the cost to be too high.

B. In a sense we are offered membership by God

1. We are offered citizenship in His kingdom. We are offered a place in His house and family. We are offered work in his vineyard.
2. The choice is ours. We can refuse it or accept it. If we accept it we must maintain our membership. It costs to be a citizen of heaven and a child of God.
3. *Luke 14:26-28 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it;"*
4. *Matt 10:22 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved."*
5. Someone has said that, "Salvation is free, but it is not cheap." This sounds like a contradiction but it isn't. Salvation is free, but keeping it costs all we have.

C. We are considering the N.T. church

1. Lesson 1 showed that the church is a place where ...
 - a. We meet the Lord.
 - b. We learn to care for others and
 - c. We prepare for the future.
2. Lesson 2 showed the church is important because...
 - a. Jesus built it; it is His church,
 - b. It was planned by God,
 - c. It is rooted in Abraham and Israel and
 - d. Jesus fulfilled the Father's plans to create it.
3. Since the church is so important we should want to be part of it.

D. Today; *How to become a member of the church*

I. The Blessings of Membership

A. We should have reasons to want to be a part of the church

1. If there are no benefits to something, why be a part of it? We must also compare the advantages of the

church to those of the world.

2. We must also distinguish between true benefits and our desires. Many desire things that are not real advantages to them. Many desires are actually deterrents.
3. Some desire a high paying job and overlook one with benefits like insurance and vacations and retirements. They don't distinguish between desires and advantages.

B. What are some of the advantages in the church?

1. The greatest is eternal life when this life is over. We have the hope of heaven and eternity in a paradise. Man has an eternal soul that will be somewhere in eternity . We need to be prepared.
2. *John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*
3. *1 John 5:11-13 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*
4. Eternal life alone is worth any price. However God offers us blessing in this life as well. Blessings in the church are both physical and spiritual.
5. We have blessings in the church as brethren. We have a family to help us in times of great need. The early church often helped one another in times of great need and persecution.
6. *Mark 10:29-30 So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, 30 who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life."*
7. *Acts 4:34-35 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.*
8. Men may fail us. We also have the privilege of prayer. We can pray to God and have the knowledge He is listening, that He cares and that He will help.
9. *James 1:5-6 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*
10. *Matt 7:9-11 "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"*
11. These are some of the blessings of membership.

C. What can the world offer?

1. There is a certain pleasure in sin. The world offers fulfillment of the 'lusts of the flesh' —Gal 5:16-21. The world offers temporary but, immediate fulfillment of the desires of men.
2. *Heb 11:24-25 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,*
3. There are pleasures in sin. However these are not real benefits because they are temporary and have consequences.
4. *1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*
5. This world will end and we will stand before God and be judged. The pleasures of the world come to an end. The joy of doing good and serving God continues into eternity.

D. True benefits are in the church of the Lord.

II. How to Become a Member

A. Since the church offers real advantages, we need to be a member.

1. We have seen the church belongs to God and Christ. God planned the church from the beginning. Jesus built His church by pay the price for it on the cross.
2. We need therefore to go to God and Christ for instructions as to how to become a member and stay a part of it.
3. The H.S. reveals to us the mind of God and the will of Christ in the Bible. The N.T. shows us how the church began and how folks became parts of it.
4. *John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."*
5. We must therefore go to the N.T. to find out how to become a Christian. We will go to the book of Acts. We have seen it shows the beginning of the church and its growth.

B. Acts 2 is the birthday of the church.

1. **Vs 1-4;** The Holy Spirit is poured out on the apostles and the gospel is preached. Several million people are in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Pentecost was always on Sunday so the church began on the first day of the week.
2. **Vs 5-8;** The church begins with the power of the H.S. The apostles speak by divine inspiration. They speak in many foreign languages. The noise of the H.S.'s coming attracts many folks.
3. **Vs 14-21;** The church also begins as a result of prophecy. Joel had predicted these things over 700 years earlier. We see again the church came from the mind of God before eternity. The church shows God's wisdom since time began.
4. **Vs 22-35;** Jesus Christ is preached. He died and arose according to the plan of God. He paid the price for sin and the church by His own blood.
5. **Vs 36-37;** Peter convinced them that they killed the One whom God sent. God raised Jesus from the dead and has set Him at His own right hand and made Him Lord and Messiah.
6. They believe this in their hearts and were very upset. They realize they have sinned and are in great trouble. They ask if they can do anything about it. They recognize the apostles are from God and can speak God's words to them.
7. **Vs 38;** This is the answer to, "What can we do?" They believed from their hearts. Now they needed to repent and be baptized to be forgiven of their sins and especially the sin of crucifying the Messiah sent from God.
8. **Vs 40-42;** Notice **first** that Peter continues to encourage them. He tells them to, "**Be saved from this corrupt generation.**" Things have not changed since then. This generation is still crooked and perverse. We still need to save ourselves —KJV.
9. Notice **second** that those who gladly accepted his word were baptized. Three thousand obeyed the Gospel and had their sins washed away in baptism. The church has a strong beginning.
10. Notice **third** that their lives were changed. They devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and to worship. They did not get baptized and just continue on with their lives. They became a part of the church and were busy with that.
11. **Vs 46-47;** We see that being a part of the church involved their daily lives and not just on Sunday. We also see that the Lord adds us to His church. Preacher don't make us members. The church does not vote us in.
12. The Lord adds us to those who are saved. Being saved is being in the church. They are not separate.
13. Being a child of God means we are members in Christ's body, the church. This is why their daily lives were so affected by becoming Christians. If you are not part of the church, you are not saved.

C. There're many other examples of this in Acts.

1. When the gospel went to Samaria after persecution began in Jerusalem, they did the same things we have seen. They heard the Gospel. They believed it, repented and were baptized.
2. *Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized."*
3. Later Philip goes and preaches to a man of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian believes the preaching of Jesus and wants to be baptized. Philip lets us know there is a requirement for baptism. It is belief. We do not baptize babies or those who are unconscious.
4. *Acts 8:35-38 "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. ³⁶ Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" ³⁷ Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered*

and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

5. Saul, who became Paul the apostle, saw the risen Lord in Acts 9:1-9. He believed in Him and repented and prayed for three days and nights. He still needed to be baptized to wash away his sins. Faith and repentance were not enough.
6. *Acts 9:17-18 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.*
7. *Acts 22:16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'*
8. The church became the most important thing for Paul. After coming to Jerusalem and being rejected, Paul did not quit or give up. He did not start his own church. He let God help him.
9. *Acts 9:26-28 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.*
10. A last example is the Gentiles in Corinth. This was a very wicked, immoral city. Yet many heard the Gospel and became parts of the church. They did it the same way everyone else did.
11. *Acts 18:8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.*

D. Faith, repentance and baptism get us into Christ and His church.

III. Faith, Repentance & Baptism

A. Many object to this.

1. They object to being told they must believe, repent and be baptized. They only want to believe and be saved by faith only.
2. Many object to the important of the church in their lives. They want to be saved and then go along as before.

B. Believing is putting our lives in Jesus' hands.

1. If we really believe something we trust our lives with it. For example we may believe in the weather service. It says a terrible storm is coming and we should evacuate. If we do we are saved.
2. Many though would not put their lives in the hands of the weather service. They would stay at home and be harmed or killed. They heard the message and understood it but did not think things would be a bad as they were.
3. We believe in Jesus Christ and the Gospel. We believe the N.T. is the divine word of God that tells us about Jesus Christ and salvation. We must put our lives in its hands and obey it.
4. *John 8:31-32 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*
5. *Eph 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*
6. We are saved by God's grace in sending Jesus to die for us. It is through or by the means of **faith**. Because we believe the Gospel of God's grace we do what God's word says and trust we are saved by it.
7. We are not saved by good works because we are in sin. Our sins hide our good works. When our sins are taken away the good works that God prepared beforehand take front and center.

C. Repentance is turning or changing.

1. Repentance was preached by the O.T. prophets. John the baptizer preached repentance. Jesus did too. All of us need to repent at some, or many points in our lives.

2. *Luke 13:3-5 "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."*
3. To repent is to turn or change. We turn from one belief to another. True repentance involves sorrow. We repent because we are sorry. We change because we want to do better.
4. *2 Cor 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*
5. Many are sorry they are caught and have to pay for their sins. Many are sorry because they feel forced to change when they do not really want to. Godly sorrow produces true repentance that leads to salvation.

D. Baptism is immersion in water.

1. Baptism is not a magnificent, valuable work that saves us by itself. Baptism is not a work of merit. It actually isn't a work at all. We submit to being baptized by another just as we are saved by Jesus' sacrifice and not our own.
2. N.T. baptism is always immersion in water. It is a burial into Christ. Philip and the Ethiopian went down into the water together, just as John the baptizer and Jesus did. Jesus and the Ethiopian were baptized and all of them came up out of the water. This isn't sprinkling or pouring.
3. *Rom 6:3-6 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*
4. Baptism is a burial. It is physically in water. It is spiritual in Christ. In water we are baptized into Christ's death, burial and resurrection. We die to sin and the world. The old man of sin is buried and put away. We are raised with Christ to live a new life.
5. This is very simple. It takes help to misunderstand this. We are raised in a new life. We live a different way. New things are important to us. We are now followers of Jesus Christ and the New Testament.
6. We are united with Christ. We are one with Him when we are baptized into Him. We are part of His body the church —Eph 1:22, 23. As part of his body we live and work in the church.
7. *Col 2:12-13 ...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,*

E. We see then the purpose and importance of faith, repentance and baptism.

Conclusion; Member in the right things is important.

A. We need to be, first of all, members of the body of Christ, the church.

1. It is in Christ and his body that all spiritual blessings are —Eph 1:3. Only by being in Christ's church can we have hope of heaven.
2. We get there by believing, repenting and being baptized.

B. If any need to respond to the Gospel and need our help, please let us know.