

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP
PART 1-BELIEVING ON CHRIST
MATTHEW 16:13-18; ACTS 1:4-15; 2:4-11; 22-47

Introduction

Years ago, on February 17, 1971, less than two months from being a 15 year old teenager, I invited the Lord Jesus Christ into my life as my personal Lord and Saviour. I willingly and joyously followed the LORD in Believer's baptism, and I became a member of a local assembly, a church in Brunswick, Georgia, called Sterling Baptist Church! (The Church I grew up in.)

I am happy, not only to say that **I am a Believer** (a Christian), but also to say that ever since I became a Believer **I have been an active member** of a New Testament Church!

We refer to this time of Bible history in which we live as the "*Church age.*" This age began when the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world and established His New Testament Church! It will end when Jesus comes back FOR HIS CHURCH!

Churches are not buildings! This building is a Church building but it is not the Church! The New Testament Church has no walls! This building is just a place to gather for worship, teaching, preaching, and prayer! The work of the Church, Christ's Body on the earth, cannot be limited to what goes on inside of a building!

The New Testament Church is a local assembly of baptized Believers who have voluntarily joined themselves together to carry out Christ's Great Commission. Each local assembly is to have only the Lord Jesus Christ as its TRUE HEAD!

The members here are to be bound together by our mutual love for the Lord Jesus Christ and our love for each other. This body of believers adheres to a body of doctrine mutually agreed upon and that is founded on the Bible! (See a copy of our Doctrinal Statement)

We trace what we are and what we do back to what Jesus established when He established the Church by bringing together a small band of Believers!

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Look at *Matthew 16:13-18!*

Following the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ just prior to His ascension the first group of Believers was assembled in Jerusalem! (*Acts 1:4-15*)

In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, we see that just like the Lord Jesus had said, **the individuals of this first local assembly of Believers were endued with the Power of the Holy Spirit from on High!** As they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, they began to speak with other languages They were speaking of the wonderful works of God! (*Acts 2:4-11*)

Then we see the Apostle Peter, also empowered by the Holy Spirit of God, preached the Gospel! (*Acts 2:22-40*) and God blessed in a miraculous way with the salvation of three thousand souls! These people were convicted of their sin as they heard the message! Their ultimate response to the Gospel is given in *Acts 2:41-47!*

We can see how this group of Believers, in obedience to what the Lord told them to do, became empowered by Him to have a great influence for the Lord! Let me ask a couple of questions here:

1. **Do you want our Church to be a Church that has a great influence for the Lord?** I hope that you do!
2. **Did you know that the Church is supposed to be great in its influence?** We ought to want what the Lord wants for us and that's what He wants for us!

The greatness of a local Church has more to do with its influence than it has to do with its size! The real measure of a Church is in its obedience to Jesus and its likeness to Jesus Christ!

Many so-called Church buildings are filled with people who are not very influential for Christ! No local Church has any greater influence than the influence of its members!

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Knowing the Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour is a most wonderful thing! A Believer's **being identified as a member of a local Bible-believing, Bible-preaching Church** is both the **privilege and the duty** of every Believer!

The way that the LORD does His work is through local bodies of Believers! God's Word declares, *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day **there were added unto them** about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).*

Here we see that this distinct group of Believers that had been established by the Lord Jesus had **added to them** about three thousand souls that day!

THEY BECAME BELIEVERS

"Then they that gladly received his word."

These people believed the Word of God as it was preached by Peter! They believed what the preacher said.

The Apostle Peter preached the message of Jesus Christ and told them of Christ, the promised Messiah!—How He came from heaven, died on the cross, was buried and rose again from the dead; and that He, this Jesus, is the only way to heaven!

The Bible says that they believed God's Word, and they were pricked in their hearts and convicted of their sin! They repented and believed the Gospel receiving Jesus Christ into their lives as their personal Lord and Saviour! The greatest thing in all the world is to know that you are a Saved and on your way to Heaven!

In *Acts 16:30*, the Apostle Paul and his helper Silas were in jail for preaching the Gospel! About midnight, as Paul and Silas were singing and praising God, the Lord shook jail where they were! The jailer, who knew that if these men escaped he would have to pay with his life, came trembling and fell down before Paul. He asked the question, *"Sirs, what must I to be saved?"*

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No doubt, they had already been speaking to him about his need for salvation! Look at what the Bible says in *Acts 16:31-34!*

The jailer asked, *"What must I do to be saved?"* (vs 30). The reply is, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Vs 31)

The Bible says in *Ephesians 2:8-9*, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."*

If there is anything added to simple faith in Christ, any work that we must do in order to be saved, salvation is no longer a gift!

I grew up with the Gospel being explained to me continually in Sunday School, preaching services, and other areas of ministry by a local Church!

I learned how that Jesus Christ came to earth and lived a sinless life! How that He died on the cross, paying my sin debt and the sin debt of the whole world! How He bore all of our sins in His body on the cross! How He was buried in a borrowed tomb! How He rose from the dead three days later and then showed Himself alive on this earth for 40 days! And then, after all that, He went back to Heaven where He now ever lives to make intercession for us at the right hand of the Heavenly Father!

Anyone willing to turn from their sins and whatever they have been trusting in to get them into Heaven, and believe only on the Gospel—i.e. believing on what Christ has done for them, can be saved!

Salvation is not in a *"Sinner's Prayer"* but rather in belief of the Gospel! Now that belief can be and often is expressed in prayer asking Christ to forgive one's sin and inviting Him into one's heart and life! In response to believing the Gospel, Christ forgives the sinner's sin, and saves him by His grace!

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As I said, I believed on the Lord as a teenager and I asked the Lord to forgive my sin and I invited Him into my life as my Lord and Saviour. I know that I am born again! Every one who is a part of this assembly should know clearly that we are saved, and know that with certainty!

We could ask someone, "*Are you an American?*" If that person is, he or she will answer without hesitation, "*Yes.*" Why is it then that you can ask the same person, "*Are you a Christian?*" and the typical answer you'll get is something like this, "*Well, I hope so...I want to be...I'm trying to be.*"

Is it possible to answer with just as much certainty that you are a child of God as you would answer about your citizenship? Yes! We can know for sure that we are God's children if we have believed the Gospel and received the Lord Jesus as our Saviour!

1 John 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

1 Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

Be ready to tell people about how you came to know the Lord. As we answer people concerning our salvation, our answer should be given in such a way that explains to them how they can know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour!

Every Believer should be able to explain to people how they came to know Christ as their personal Saviour when they are asked about their faith in God!

As the Bible speaks of the Church here in Acts chapter two, the very first thing that God tells us is that these people believed! Have you believed?

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It troubles me greatly to think that there may be many people who have identified with a local Church but may have never come to know the Lord Jesus Christ yet as their personal Saviour!
(e.g. I was one of those myself for a period of about 7 or 8 yrs.)

Conclusion

THEY BECAME BELIEVERS...