

Question: Do you have to be a church member to be saved?

If by “church member” one means a member of the New Testament church that Jesus built, and for which He shed His blood, the answer is yes (Matt 16:18; Eph 1:7; 5:25-27). Really, to ask the question above is like asking if one must be a Christian to be saved, or if one needs the blood of Christ to be saved. The clear Biblical answer to these questions is a resounding “yes!” “For the husband is head of the wife, **as Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body**” (Eph 5:23). The “body” is, of course, “His body, which is the church” (Col 1:24).

According to the New Testament, the blood of Christ will save anyone who obeys the conditions of pardon for his sins; the Lord then adds him to the church (Acts 2:47). The Greek word for “church” (*ekklesia*) is a common collective noun like flock, herd or covey. In a spiritual context, the church is a collection of people forgiven by God of their sins and saved from His punishment for them. The church cannot save anyone, it is not the Savior; Christ is the Savior, and the church is comprised of those people He will save.

Questions like the one above are usually asked by people who believe they can be Christians “at large,” without making a commitment to the Lord’s people in a local church. Such people fail to understand that being a Christian (a member of Christ’s body the church) involves interacting with other members in that body. Paul described the church in Corinth as a human body with all of its separate parts working together under one head (1Cor 12:12ff).

Finally, the church of which you should be an active member recognizes only one Head and Sovereign Ruler, (Jesus Christ). The Father, “put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:22-23). The word of Christ, now in written form, directs the course of the church that belongs to Him (2Jn 9). It is He alone who commands all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel (Acts 17:30; Mk 1:15; 1Cor 15:1ff). It is He, not His church, who commands all responsible people to be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; Mk 16:16; Rom 6:3-4, 17-18). And, in closing, it is Jesus who at His last hour prayed that His disciples might always work together as one (Jn 17:20-23).

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