Can We Follow Jesus But Forget The Church?

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday February 4th, 2024

Text: Ephesians 5:23 Scripture Reading: I Peter 1:18-19

### Intro

1. There is much confusion on the subject of the role of the church and it’s relation to salvation:
   1. In a world where church membership is like a buffet line, man asks, “Which church?”
   2. Church membership is looked at as “church shopping” where people ask, “What do you offer?”
   3. Confusion sets in as to when salvation is attained: Baptism vs. Prayer, or other…?
   4. Many question, “Is salvation found apart from the church?”
2. April 2nd, 2012 Newsweek Cover said, “Forget the Church, Follow Jesus!”
   1. Inside the article, “Christianity In Crisis” by Andrew Sullivan, asserted that “Christianity has been destroyed by politics, priests, and get-rich evangelists.” He says, “Ignore them, and embrace Him.”
   2. He quotes from Thomas Jefferson and from Francis of Assisi, and concludes that Christians need to move away from “organized religion” and embrace Jesus’ words on the “Sermon on the Mount.” (He likes Jefferson’s cut-&-paste your own Bible example)
   3. According to Andrew Sullivan, the Sermon on the Mount is all one needs to live a Christian life, one of love – but love to Sullivan is tolerance of any and every sin!
   4. The article implies saints today have the attitude, “I like faith, I like spirituality, I love Jesus, but I don’t love the church.” **\**Read excerpt down below! (In response to article)***
3. The church is important to God and should be important to man! (Luke 22:19-20: Jesus shed His own blood for the new covenant!)
4. Can one follow Jesus, but forget the church?

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| **God describes the church as:** | **To forget the church, one says:** |
| The body of Christ – Ephesians 1:22-23 | “I like you, but I can’t stand your body” |
| The household of God – Ephesians 2:19 | “I like you, but I want to remain an orphan” |
| The temple of God – Ephesians 2:21-22 | “I like you, but want to worship apart from you” |
| The kingdom of Christ and God – Ephesians 5:5 | “I like you, but don’t want to be a citizen w/you” |
| The bride of Christ – Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-9 | “I like you, but I hate your wife” |

1. Can one be saved and not be a part of the church for which Jesus died?

#### If one can be saved apart from the church…One can be saved without being ***“Called Out!”***

* 1. Church – *Gr. ek (Str. 1537):* “out of” & *Gr. kaleo (Str. 2564):* “to call, a calling.”
     1. *Gr. ekklesia (Str. 1577):* A compound of *1537 & 2564*; “called out, calling out”
     2. The “church” is the body of Christ *(Colossians 1:24)*, made up of the “called out.”
  2. The church is “called out” of the world – Ephesians 2:1-3; II Corinthians 6:14-18
  3. The church is “called out” by the gospel – II Thessalonians 2:14
     1. *I Corinthians 15:1-4:* Gospel facts: Christ lived, died for the sins of mankind, and rose from the dead!
     2. *Ephesians 5:*23: Jesus is the Savior of the body (the church: Ephesians 1:22-23)
  4. If people can be saved out of the church, then:
     1. They can be saved without being “called out.”
     2. They can be saved without the gospel that calls men *(II Thessalonians 2:14).*
     3. They can be saved in the world, “dead in their sins” *(Ephesians 2:1-3).*
     4. They can be saved and not be a part of Christ’s body (Acts 2:47; Romans 12:4-5)
  5. Christ is the Savior of the body (the church) so one must be “called out” to be saved!

#### If one can be saved apart from the church…One can be saved without the ***Blood of Christ!***

* 1. The church was purchased (bought) by the blood of Christ – Acts 20:28
     1. The church is made of people bought by the blood of Christ – I Peter 1:18-19: We are not our own to do with whatever we please! (I Corinthians 6:19-20)
     2. Those “called out” have been saved from sin by the blood of Christ – Ephesians 1:7
  2. The cross stands between a sinful world and salvation – Ephesians 2:11-16
     1. In the world, men are “without God and without hope” *(Ephesians 2:12).*
     2. In the world, men are “excluded from the life of God” *(Ephesians 4:18).*
     3. In the world, men are “children of (disobedience) wrath” *(Ephesians 2:2-3).*
     4. In the church, men are “brought near by the blood of Christ” *(Ephesians 2:13).*
     5. In the church, men are “reconciled to God” through the cross *(Ephesians 2:16).*
     6. In the church, men are “reconciled to God” in one body *(Ephesians 2:16).*
  3. If people can be saved out of the church (be member of any church they choose, or not a part of any church by “Following Jesus, but forgetting the church”), then:
     1. They can be saved without the blood of Christ!
     2. That would mean: Christ died in vain! *(Ephesians 1:7: Forgives; Revelation 1:5: Washes)*
  4. Christ died to purchase the church because it was necessary (Luke 24:25-27) so the church is essential )Acts 2:47): Jesus’ blood saves those in the body (the church)!

#### If one can be saved apart from the church…One can be saved without being ***Sanctified*** and ***Cleansed!***

* 1. The church is sanctified and cleansed; its members are to be holy & blameless! (Ephesians 5:23, 25-27)
  2. The church identifies people who are “sanctified” (set apart from the world): *(Called out)*
     1. I Corinthians 1:2: The church is called to sanctification in Christ.
     2. Hebrews 12:14: Sanctification is necessary for eternal salvation!
     3. Ephesians 5:27: The church is holy (“set apart”)! *(II Corinthians 6:17)*
  3. The church identifies people who are cleansed from sin (by blood of Christ):
     1. Acts 22:16: Washing away our sins begins with obedience to the gospel in baptism!
     2. Ephesians 1:7: Forgiveness of sins is to be cleansed (Revelation 1:5: “Washed” NKJV).
     3. Ephesians 2:5: To be saved is to be cleansed!
     4. I Corinthians 6:9-11: One must be sanctified and washed from their sins of the past!
  4. If people can be saved out of the church, then:
     1. They can be saved without sanctification *(Hebrews 12:14)!*
     2. They can be saved without being cleansed *(Revelation 1:5)!*
     3. They can be saved still in the world and in their sins! *(I Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 2:1)*
  5. Since the church is made up of “sanctified and cleansed” people (necessary for salvation), the church is essential for eternal salvation!

## Conclusion

1. Since the church is made up of the saved (Ephesians 5:23), in order to be saved, one must be a member of the church! (Acts 2:47)
2. To be saved requires:
   1. *Faith in Christ – Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37*
   2. *Repentance of sins – Romans 2:4; Acts 2:38*
   3. *Confession of Christ – Romans 10:10; Acts 8:37*
   4. *Baptism into Christ – Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27*
   5. *Faithful living – Romans 1:17; Revelation 2:10*
3. By obedience to the gospel one becomes a part of the saved body – “called out” from the world
4. The church will one day be presented to God as His bride – she must be found holy & blameless *(Ephesians 5:27; John 14:2-3; Revelation 19:7-9).*
   1. ***Won’t be holy and blameless if stained with the practices of the world! (I Corinthians 6:9-10)***
5. The church is important to God and to man!
   1. Christ died for it to sanctify it, to cleanse it, and to save it! *(Ephesians 5:23-27)*
6. Are you outside the Lord’s church? (Matthew 16:18)
   1. You cannot “follow Christ but forget the church!”
   2. If outside the Lord’s church, there is no salvation but condemnation (*II Thessalonians 1:7-9)!*
7. Obey the gospel today and be joined to the church (the called out) that Jesus died to save!
8. If not a Christian, you can become a member of the saved body, and be washed in the blood of the Lamb!
9. If a Christian in error, remember the blessings of being a part of His family; Repent!
10. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!

Sources:

* Response to April, 2012 *Newsweek* article, “Christianity In Crisis” by Andrew Sullivan, 04//02/12
* [**https://www.newsweek.com/andrew-sullivan-christianity-crisis-64025**](https://www.newsweek.com/andrew-sullivan-christianity-crisis-64025)

\* It’s interesting to see how those who advocate a return to the words of Jesus often display a frightening ignorance of what Jesus actually said. The primary message of Jesus was not love – at least, not love in our sense of the word: a warm, fuzzy feeling as it is often taught in the world. The message of Jesus was Love with a capital “L” – meaning, His message was about Himself. It was about His kingdom, His identity as king, and the cross that became His throne. Love is agape love, putting someone else’s needs above your own.

So when Andrew Sullivan says that Jesus would have been “baffled” by current debates over homosexuality or abortion, I would counter that Jesus spoke to both of these issues and more, albeit indirectly:

– The sexual ethic He put forth is so radical that even a lustful thought after another human being is considered sinful.

o Mat 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY';

o Mat 5:28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

– The picture of God’s intention of marriage – male and female from the dawn of creation – is reinforced so strongly that divorce or homosexuality ought to become unthinkable.

o Mar 10:6 "But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE.

o Mar 10:7 "FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER,

o Mar 10:8 AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh.

o Mar 10:9 "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

– Abortion? How can we listen to Jesus talk about God’s care for a fallen sparrow or watch Him bless the little children and believe He would have nothing to say to those who would still the heartbeats of those who are “more precious” to the Father than the birds of the air? Saints are called to be like little children to inherit the Kingdom!

o Mat\_10:29 "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. “So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows” (Mat. 10:31).

o Mat\_18:3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

o Mat\_19:14 But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."