

LESSON 3



MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Scripture Texts: John 10:9; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 3:14-15; Ezekiel 44:9

From our studies in the Bible about the Church of God, we see that it is a divine church and different from any sect, denomination, or any organization that man can set up. To become a member of this church, one must obtain salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior. Then one must go on and be filled with the Holy Spirit to receive the power to do the work of the church freely. It is not our church, but God's.

MEMORY VERSE: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."*

John 10:1

The Door Into the Church

John 10:9 **I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.** Jesus, speaking here, proclaimed Himself to be the only door to salvation—into the church. No one is or can be a member of the Church of God who has not come through the door, Christ Jesus, into the experience of a new birth. This is a definite experience in the heart. It happens at one certain time. One may not know what to call it, but he feels it. The infilling of the Holy Spirit may be received at the same time, or it may be later. The early church at Pentecost had to wait for this infilling, but we today do not need to wait for this power in our lives. It only takes long enough for us to sell out to God in dedicating our lives for His service. Then Christ fits us into the active, visible body of Christ, the Church of God. No organization of man is entered this way. This is one church that you cannot join. There are no unsaved people in the Church of God. Christ is not the door to any sect; therefore, no sect is the Church of God.

And shall go in and out, and find pasture. Christ, still speaking here, told us that one entering in by Him shall go in the door and on out into God's great, rich and green pasture field and find fresh pasture—food for the soul. One is not in the Church of God until one is called out from the barren hills of Babylon, from all man-made churches, and comes home to the only true fold. Here one can feed on the top of Mount Zion, which is above all the hills of Babylon's confusion.

Acts 2:47 **The Lord added to the church.** The Lord is the secretary of the church as well as the door. He adds one's name to the Book of Life when one is saved and blots the name out when one commits sin. The Lord is the only secretary because He, and He alone, knows when one is truly born there (Psalm 87:5-6). He knows because only He can make a dead soul live. **The Lord knoweth them that are his** (2 Timothy 2:19). No man knows all who are saved and all who are not. God does. He sees hearts (Philippians 4:3; Exodus 32:33). No saved one is left out; no unsaved one is taken in.

Men write names of those who join their churches in earthly books of paper and ink. These records can be destroyed now, and surely will be in the end of time. The only membership record that will stand is the one kept in Heaven by Christ (Revelation 20:12, 15; 21:27).

The Name

Ephesians 3:14-15 The church is one family in Heaven and on earth and is named after the Father. The family is the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). Every member born into a family takes the father's name. **I bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.** The whole family *is* named—the children who are born in have no choice in the matter. No one receives a nickname or an adopted name because there are no illegitimate children. When a child is born into any of our families there is no question in our minds what the child's name is. It is the same as the father's. Family names could not be carried on by the given names, or first names (John 17:11).

When it comes to churches many will say that the name is not important. God let us know from the beginning that He considered the name very important. In all cases it distinguishes families. Your name is very important in every aspect of your life. For example, if two men with identical names are called to discuss receiving an inheritance, each must bring proof of his father's name. This will identify the man the inheritance is meant for.

God gave His family a name, and He will not tolerate anyone trying to separate His family by changing its name. When our children were born into our family we would not have listened to anyone who came in and told us what a nice child we had, but that she needed a home and a name. She had a good home—the father's home. She had a name—the father's name.

No Strangers in God's Family

Ezekiel 44:9 **No stranger, uncircumcised in heart . . . shall enter into my sanctuary.** The sanctuary, or temple, was a type of the church. It pictured beforehand in an outward, material form what was to be true of the church spiritually. No stranger to Christ, no one uncleansed in heart can enter the church. Christ is the door, and He makes no mistakes.

God's Church, Not Ours

The name of the Church of God is a descriptive name, not one arbitrarily chosen and given to it. Man did not name it. In the Bible it is called the Church of God because it IS that. To assume the name of the Church of God can never make one a member of it. To gather together with members of the Church of God cannot make one a member of it. One is a member only by being born into it of **the will . . . of God** (John 1:13). When these studies speak of "the Church of God," they do not mean "our group" or a group meeting in a certain place or having the name "Church of God" painted over the door only. These can contain the unsaved as well as the saved. The church is those in these places and all places who are in Christ Jesus. They are truly the sons of God.

JUST A THOUGHT

Quality is better than quantity.