Identity Crisis Section 2 Pastor Rick Baker

*#4 Who is the Church?* February 7 2021

# SAVED CHURCH MEMBERS

*The “Believers’ Church” (Term created by Max Weber, 1905)*

*Those who accepted his (Peter) message were* ***baptized*** *(immersed, dipped), and…were* ***added*** *to their number that day.* (Acts 2:41)

THIS BIBLICAL PATTERN OF THE **HOLY** CHURCH answers the question “WHO IS THE CHURCH?”

**How to rediscover our primitive roots**: *the saved were always baptized and always added to the local assembly of believers. “Unbaptized saved” people or “baptized non-members” are never mentioned as existing in the New Testament.*

## Where the “Church” went wrong

* Infant baptism
* Tradition over scripture
* Bible kept from the people
* Mass “conversions” under political orders of dominant magistrates—unified Europe (corpus christianum)

The quest for unity at the expense of holiness. *The Medieval Church became political at the expense of biblical—CORPUS PERMIXTUM*

* Peace of Augsburg 1555—*cuius regio, eius religio*
* Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians and Calvinists persecute Anabaptists for their stand on “believer baptism.”

*When Christianity is declared the religion of the state, holiness is historically the casualty.*

***How to recover biblical church, a holy church—***Our Puritan🡪Separatist🡪General or Particular Baptist Roots (1611)—Baptists, *“sought a church composed of* ***visible saints****, that is, true believers, observing the gospel ordinances and obeying the commands of Christ.”* (McBeth, The Baptist Heritage, 75.) [see 2 Kgs 22-23]

1. Only **believers** are part of the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:13), and members of the local church

“…those sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:2)

2. **Baptism** is the public sign of salvation commitment. (Acts 2:38; 8:16; Rom.6:4; Col.2:11-12)

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Rom. 6:4)

3. Only **people baptized as believers** may be members of the local church (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14)

“*If baptism is limited to believers only, and if church membership is limited to those baptized, the church will have only believers in its membership*.” (Hammett, 99)

4. The **Lord’s Table** is intended to picture both, total loyalty to Christ ***and*** to His local expression of His Body. Membership ensures that. (1 Cor. 11:27-29)

Confessional Baptists to the present day hold out for the purity of the ordinance of the Lord’s Table by insisting that only membership assures the pure convictions of the participants in communion.

*“Being a church ordinance, it (baptism) is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership AND to the Lord’s Supper…*” and the Lord’s Supper is for “*members of the church*.” (The Baptist Faith and Message, 14)

Further, *“the Lord’s Supper is an ordinance of the church. It cannot be appropriately practiced by separate individuals in isolation.”* (Erickson, Christian Theology, 1121)

“*The Lord’s Supper is not only a symbol of present community with Christ, but also with one another within Christ’s fellowship*.” (Grenz, Theology for the Community of God, 701)

5. The **governing** of the church must be limited to believers—membership is the biblical way to ensure that.

(1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Cor. 5:4)

*“We believe that the great king, and lawgiver, Christ, the universal and only head of his church, hath given to his visible church, a subordinate power, or authority, for the well-being, ordering, and governing of it…the executive part of which derivative power of discipline and government, is committed to his ministers.”* (The Orthodox Creed, 1697—quoted by Hammett)

6. The biblical mechanism for preserving the purity (regenerate church membership) of the local church is **redemptive church discipline**—*the gift of the “Keys of the Kingdom.” (Matt. 16:19; 18:17,18; 1 Cor. 5:4,5)*

*“…anyone who calls himself a brother.” (1 Cor. 5:11)*

Although the work of salvation is invisible, the proof of salvation is not. *“Practice must not be allowed to contradict profession.”* (Garrett, Baptist Church Discipline, 36)

## The So What? Why? of the Calvary Baptist Church Practices

* *High importance and emphasis on receiving the gospel. (Jn. 3:3)*
* *High importance on believer baptism. (Matt. 28:19)*
* *High importance on formal membership—“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” (Ps. 107:2; Acts 2:41)*
* *Members-only participate in governance. (1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Cor. 5:4)*
* *“Foundations of the Faith”—understand core Christian beliefs.*
* *“Testimonies from the Tank”—assure the body of authentic salvation.*
* *“How to Belong”—learning what it means to have covenantal loyalty to the local body of believers.*
* *A soul-searching Lord’s Table—right with Christ (baptized, in obedience)* ***and*** *right with one another (in formal fellowship). (1 Cor. 11:27-29)*
* *Willingness to discipline out of the fellowship, persistent unregenerate behaviour from church members.* *(Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5)*

Are you **SAVED**?

If you are saved, have you publically obeyed the command of Christ to identify with Christ and declare your salvation commitment through **BAPTISM**?

If you are saved, and baptized as a believer, have you followed the New Testament pattern and made a formal covenant with a local body of believers through **MEMBERSHIP**?

**Who is the church?** *According to New Testament practice, saved, baptized, members of the local church, are the church.*