

The Body of Christ

The Apostle's Creed - Article III
Lesson 6

This lesson includes a study of the remaining elements of the Third Article. It will cover the Christian Church, the communion of saints, forgiveness, resurrection, and everlasting life.

The Holy Christian Church

What are two definitions for "Church"?

1. *The Building*
2. *The believers*

Read Matthew 16:13-18. What had Peter just said concerning who Jesus is? _

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God

Who had given this knowledge to Peter? *God the Father*

Catholics think the term "this rock" refers to Peter. They believe the church was to be built upon Peter. But consider what Peter had just said and what the Lord had just said to Peter.

What is "this rock"? *Faith*

Faith in what? *That Jesus is the Son of God*

The term "church" is sometimes divided into two aspects - visible and invisible.

What does the word "visible" mean? *Able to be seen*

What then is the "visible" church? *What we see, namely people*

What would be the "invisible" church? *Those people who live by faith (though we see faith in action)*

Look up Matthew 18:20. What does this have to say about what a church is?

It is not a building, but a gathering of people in Jesus' name.

Can a person be a Christian without fellowship with other Christians?

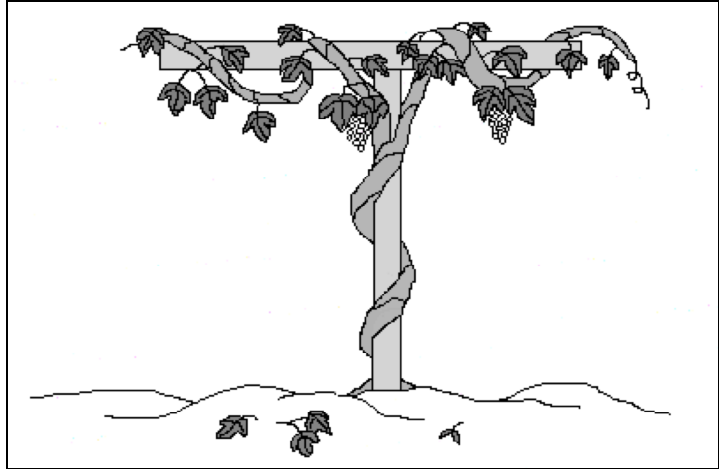
It is very difficult: "There is no such thing as an independent Christian"

What would happen if you never listened to or spoke with other Christians?

Your faith would eventually die

Could your faith survive? It would be very difficult

So far in this lesson, it has been determined that the church is built on the "rock" of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. The church has visible and invisible aspects. It has also been pointed out that the church is a gathering of believers sharing their faith. But what role does Jesus play in this church? Look at the picture of the grapevine below. Jesus described His role in terms of a grapevine. Consider what the vine does for the branches.



What part of the plant holds the branches together? The vine

What part of the plant brings life to the branches? The vine

If the branches receive proper nutrients, what do they produce? Grapes, fruit

What will happen to the branches that have fallen off. They die

Are those branches dead immediately? No

Will they ever produce fruit or have more life once they have fallen off?

 No

Read John 15:4,5. What does "abide" mean? To stay, reside, dwell

Who is the vine? Jesus

Who are the branches? We are: Christians

Remember what the grapevine does for the branches. In light of this information, what does Jesus do for His church?

A. gives it life B. gives unity (hold it together)

Read Ephesians 2:19-22. Who builds the church? God

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus tells the disciples that very gates of hell will not prevail against His church. In the book of Romans (Romans 8:35-39), Paul lists ten things that will not be able to separate us from the love of Christ. It is quite an impressive list and brings home the point Jesus made about the strength of His Church.

Unscramble the letters to determine what the ten items are.

1. theda Death

2. fiel Life

3. gelans angels

4. palciprinitities principalities

5. things setpren present

6. things to emoc come

7. wopers powers

8. theigh height

9. thepd depth

10. aningthy anything

Can the church of Jesus Christ ever be destroyed? No

The Communion of Saints

This discussion will begin with a look at the terms "communion" and "saints." The term "communion" means "togetherness."

Who are the saints? Believers - living and dead (asleep)

So what is the "communion of saints"? togetherness of believers

If believers are scattered across the earth, how can they all be together?

Christ dwells in each - common faith, common gifts, common hope

How can we be united with those who have already died? *They are alive in Christ, dead only physically*

The Forgiveness of Sins

A discussion of the forgiveness of sins includes several topics. First of all, for forgiveness to make any sense whatsoever, we must understand our need for forgiveness. If we do not see ourselves as sinners, then we cannot understand that we need to be forgiven. How do we know we are sinners?

As pointed out in an earlier lesson, because of Adam's rebellion, we are all born rebellious against God. This is now our nature. The term for this is "original sin."

Read Psalm 51:5. What does this tell us? *I have been sinful since before I was born*

Not only are we born sinful, we persist in this condition.

Read Romans 3:23. What does this tell us? *all have sinned*

How are we delivered from this sinful condition? Read Ephesian 1:7.

Through the blood of Jesus

What must we do to have this much-needed forgiveness? Read Acts 16:30,31.

Believe in the Lord Jesus

Can we "earn" this forgiveness? Read Ephesians 2:8. *No - it is a gift from*

God

Remember that Jesus died for all of us and for all of our sins. Sometimes feelings of guilt still linger. Sometimes people do not feel forgiven. It is so important to realize that forgiveness is a fact and not a feeling. If you believe in the Lord as your Savior and you are sorry for your sins, you are forgiven. That is wonderful news!

The Resurrection of the Body

Just as Jesus died and then rose again, so shall we. The Bible indicates that this resurrection is of the body. Look up John 5:28,29.

Who will hear His voice? *Those in their graves*

What will they do? come out

At this point one of two things will occur. What are those two things?

1. good will live 2. Evil will be condemned

What determines “good” versus “evil”?

faith in Jesus

Paul indicates in Philippians 3:21 that these resurrected bodies will be different from our present bodies. The Bible indicates that the body Jesus had after His resurrection was different from before that event. Read the Philippians passage.

What will our bodies be like? Like Jesus’ glorious body

There will be no more death or decay or weakness in our bodies.

And the Life Everlasting

The Bible teaches that not only will we rise and have new and glorious bodies but that in that condition we will enter into everlasting life.

Read John 5:24. People who have faith also have what? Eternal life

Now read John 11:25,26. What happens to people who believe in Jesus?

we will live even though we die - never die