**Presented Themselves Before God**

If you don’t seek God’s presence on earth, why do you think you will enjoy his presence in heaven? Please reconsider how you think about church. Church is simply an assembly. Locally, it is a congregation of saints, those striving to be such. God’s presence is there, in this assembly. This is key. Let me give you an Old Testament illustration followed by a New Testament example. “Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem…and they presented themselves before God. (Joshua 24:1). This assembly was presented before God. Would you go if God was there?

Here is something strange. People want to go to heaven to be with God, but refuse to enter into the assembly where God’s presence is. Why? Whatever reason you give, it’s not good enough. If God is there, go! Present yourself before him. Now if you don’t believe God is there in a special sense, then you have not considered carefully many Bible passages.

“For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” (Matt. 18:20). Let’s take the promise of Jesus more seriously. He promised to be in church. As a disciple of Jesus, do you follow him there?

“I will build My church/assembly; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Mat. 16:18). Jesus’ church or assembly, will not be harmed by “Hades”, a promise Jesus makes. Jesus has always kept his promise. But here is an example of a man who was harmed by Hades, “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, ” (Luke 16:23). If this man would have been a faithful member of the church that Jesus built, he would not have been harmed in Hades. Remember, Jesus promised, “I will build My church/assembly; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Mat. 16:18). This man in Hades was warned, but he did not believe the warning (Luke 16:30-31). This man is now paying a high price for his own sins. Consider another passage about church.

“The church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28). The people in church believe that the blood of Jesus has purchased them. Jesus has earned their love and devotion, the cross. They assemble to be with Jesus now, and hold onto the promise that in the future Hades is powerless against them. They believe Jesus. They hold on to this promise. They faithfully assemble because Jesus faithfully suffered on their behalf. Jesus walks among his churches (Revelation 1:20, 2:1). Come to church to be with Jesus, no? Go to heaven to be with Jesus, yes? Hmmm. How strange! Do you believe or do you not? Your feet tell the story. Do they regularly carry you into the presence of God, in the assembly? Dan Peters