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WHAT THE CHURCH IS Decatur, IL

INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **Ephesians 2:17-22**.
B. The way in which I want to look at the church tonight is to see it from the vantage point of its members. As Xians we are members of X's church, so what does that make us in God's eyes?
C. Tonight, nine things that the people of God are.

WHAT THE CHURCH IS.

A. *First*, the church is **those saved from sin**.
   1. Salvation from the eternal punishment of sin (Mt. 1:21).
      "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."
   2. A person cannot be saved and not be a member of the church. Those who think they are saved yet not a member of the church are mistaken (Ac. 2:40-41, 47).
      (Ac. 2:40-41) And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" **41** So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
      (Ac. 2:47) praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.
B. *Second*, the church is **those who have been purchased with the blood of X**.
   1. The blood of Jesus was shed for the forgiveness of sin (see Mt. 26:28), and that is the purchase price of the church (Ac. 20:28).
      "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
   2. The church, which is in the kingdom of God, was purchased with blood, the blood of X (Rev. 5:9-10).
      And they sang^ a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou was slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. **10** "And Thou hast made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."
C. *Third*, the church is **those who are sanctified**.
   1. Sanctified means to be holy, set apart for a special reason or service.
   2. Those in the church are sanctified, not those on the outside (1Cor. 1:1-2).
      Paul, called *as* an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, **2** to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours:
D. *Fourth*, the church is **the body of Christ**.
   1. Everyone has a physical body and can relate to the church being the body of X (Col. 1:18,24).
      He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything… **24** Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.
   2. Each part has a different function but works in conjunction with every other part (Eph. 1:22-23).
      And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.
E. *Fifth*, the church is **the body of the reconciled**.
   1. To be reconciled means to be brought back into union with. We have been brought back into fellowship with God in the church.
   2. There is no longer a Jew/Gentile distinction. In the church, all are Xians (Eph. 2:13-17).
      But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, **15** by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in

ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, **16** and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. **17** AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;

F. *Sixth*, the church is **Christ's spiritual wife**.
   1. As the marriage relationship is understood, so should our relationship to X be understood as members of His church (Eph. 5:32; Rev. 19:7-9).
      (Eph 5:32) This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.
      (Rev 19:7-9) "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." **8** And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. **9** And he said^ to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said^ to me, "These are true words of God."
   2. Jesus is betrothed to the church. The church is the engaged bride of X. To be unfaithful to the Lord is spiritual adultery (Eph. 5:28-29).
      So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; **29** for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church,

G. *Seventh*, the church is **those who are spiritually in God**.
   1. See 1Th. 1:1,2; 2Th. 1:1.
   1. Our sin kept us from being in God's favor and fellowship. But in the church we have a spiritual relationship with God (1Th. 1:1-2).
      Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. **2** We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers;
   2. It is safe to say that Xians are "in God" the same way as we are "in X" (2Th. 1:1).
      Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

H. *Eighth*, the church is **the enrolled in heaven**.
   1. Jesus is the "firstborn" of God, having the pre-eminence (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15,18).
      (Rom 8:29) For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;
      (Col 1:15,18) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **18** He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.
   2. In this passage, however, Gk., the word *firstborn* is plural, meaning the "firstborn ones." The church is a group of people having a prime relationship with God (Heb. 12:22-23).
      But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, **23** to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,

I. *Ninth*, the church is **the institution in which God will be eternally glorified**.
   1. Only as faithful members of X's church will we be able to glorify God forever (Eph. 3:21).
      …to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.
   2. God is glorified in the church. We must be very careful not to mix para-church organizations with the church.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

A. The church is the most important institution on the face of the earth.
B. No other group, organization or institution can claim the blessings that the church does.
C. No other group, organization or institution can do the work that the church does.
D. Are you a member of X's church?
E. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.