

WHY I BELIEVE: THE CHURCH IS THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Hebrews 12:18-24

I. INTRODUCTION

A. I BELIEVE GOD IS FATHER, ALMIGHTY, CREATOR

1. ALMIGHTY CREATOR

- Evidence of—Biblical Record—Science—Nature
- Human—Logic—Conscience—Intuition

2. FATHER

- His Spirit enables us to call Him “Abba, Father”—[Gal 4](#)
- His Spirit bears witness to our Spirit—we are His children—[Rom 8](#)

B. I BELIEVE JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD AND LORD

1. ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD

- Eternal—co-equal and co-creator with God the Father
- Poured out—as Son of Man

2. LORD

- Exalted above all—for His obedience—death on cross
- Restored Son of Man—to pre-incarnate glory of Son of God
- We acknowledge Him as Lord—key to salvation

3. IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE—HE HAS CHANGED ME

- [II Cor 5:17](#)—*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, his is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

C. I BELIEVE GOD’S SON WAS VIRGIN-BORN

1. IMPORTANCE

- Full humanity of Christ—born of woman
- Full deity of Christ—supernaturally conceived by God

2. CHRIST’S ETERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS—BASIS FOR REDEMPTION

- a. **Perfect** God-Man—inherently **sinless**—**infinite** divine sacrifice for all human sin
- b. Our Righteousness—comes from His perfect obedience—*and* eternal righteousness as Son
- c. Our Pardon—relies on this righteousness

D. I BELIEVE GOD’S SON DIED FOR ME

1. WHAT HIS DEATH DOES

- Defeats death
- Atones for sins
- Reconciles us to Father—saves us
- Demonstrates God’s love
- Assures us of victory

2. HOW I KNOW CHRIST DIED FOR ME

- *Only* to those being saved—the preaching of the cross is the *power* of God—[I Cor 1:18](#)

E. I BELIEVE JESUS CHRIST WAS RESURRECTED

1. EVIDENCE OF EMPTY TOMB

2. BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS OF RESURRECTION AND HIS APPEARANCES
3. WITNESS OF EARLY CHURCH
4. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF PROMISE OF RESURRECTION

II Cor 4:14—*Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.*

F. I BELIEVE JESUS REIGNS WITH THE FATHER

1. HIS POSITION IS SUPREME—SOVEREIGN
2. HE IS IN HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE—GLORIFIED AT THE FATHER’S SIDE
3. HE IS RULING OVER HIS KINGDOM
4. HE IS DOING HIS WORK THERE
 - Fulfilling His promise—preparing us a place
 - Interceding with the Father
 - Achieving final victory—working it out
 - Holding everything together
5. WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE ETERNALLY
 - He is Servant King
 - As His bond-servants, we share His kingdom
 - We follow Him: to reign—is to serve

G. I BELIEVE JESUS WILL RETURN

1. HOW PAROUSIA WILL OCCUR
 - a. Visibly—noticeably—everyone will see and hear
 - b. Instantly— in the twinkling of an eye
 - c. Powerfully—on the clouds with great power and glory
 - d. Unexpectedly—as a thief in the night—nobody knows the time or day
2. WHY PAROUSIA WILL TAKE PLACE
 - a. To consummate redemptive history
 - o Complete His victory over sin, death, and evil
 - o Usher in His eternal kingdom
 - o Re-create the new order—new heaven and new earth
 - b. To collect His saints
 - c. To judge the living and the dead
 - o Believers before the *bema*—for rewards to serve and reign eternally
 - o Non-believers before Great White Throne—condemned for disbelief

H. I BELIEVE GOD HAS SENT US HIS SPIRIT

- THE PERSONAL PRESENCE OF ETERNAL GOD
- COMES ALONGSIDE—COMFORTER—ADVOCATE—TEACHER
- BRINGS BOLDNESS—STRENGTH—POWER—TO WITNESS FOR CHRIST
- BUILDS GOD’S KINGDOM—IDENTIFIES—EQUIPS—EDIFIES HIS CHURCH
- ULTIMATE PURPOSES—TESTIFY ABOUT CHRIST—AND GLORIFY HIM

I. I BELIEVE THE CHURCH IS THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

I believe in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints .

II. BACKGROUND TEXT—EXODUS 19:10-25

9 *The LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever.” Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD. 10 The LORD also said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; 11 and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.’ When the ram’s horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.” 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. 15 He said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.” 16 So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. 19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. 20 The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. 21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Go down, warn the people, so that they do not break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. 22 Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, or else the LORD will break out against them.” 23 Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds about the mountain and consecrate it.’” 24 Then the LORD said to him, “Go down and come up again, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break*

through to come up to the LORD, or He will break forth upon them.” 25 So Moses went down to the people and told them.

A. THE UNAPPROACHABLE MOUNTAIN

1. THREE WARNINGS—DON'T DARE TOUCH THE MOUNTAIN
2. PENALTY = DEATH

B. OLD COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

1. GOD IS HOLY—SEPARATE FROM SINFUL PEOPLE
 - **Is 6:1**—Isaiah saw the Lord—*sitting on a throne, high and lifted up*
 - **Is 6:5**—Isaiah's response—*Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*
2. GOD IS AWESOME—INSPIRED FEAR IN PEOPLE
3. GOD'S HOLINESS DESTROYS SIN—IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE GOD AND LIVE!
4. GOD COULD COME CLOSE—BUT ONLY AT HIS OWN INITIATIVE
 - **Jer 23:23**—*Am I a God who is 'near', declares the Lord. And not a God far off?*

C. EXEMPLIFIED IN HOLY OF HOLIES—AND ARK OF COVENANT

1. ONLY HIGH PRIEST COULD ENTER HOLY OF HOLIES—JUST ONCE A YEAR
2. NOBODY BUT KOHATHITE LEVITES COULD TOUCH ARK—**Nu 4:15**
 - Uzzah struck dead—as he tried to rescue Ark from falling—**II Sam 6**

D. NEW COVENANT—ACCESS TO RELATIONSHIP CHANGED

1. VEIL TORN AT CRUCIFIXION
2. JESUS' SACRIFICIAL DEATH—GIVES IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO THE FATHER

Heb 10:19-22—*Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

III. BIBLICAL TEXT—HEBREWS 12: 18-24

18 *For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, 19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. 20 For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned."*

21 *And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, “I am full of fear trembling.”* **22** *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 firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,* **24** *and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*

o **THE GREAT DIVIDE HAS BEEN CLOSED!**

o **EZEKIEL’S PROPHECY FULFILLED**

Ez 37:26-8—*I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set y sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.*

o **FUTURE PROMISE—NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH**

Rev 21:3—*And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and thy shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them*

IV. THE CHURCH HAS A—COMMUNAL DESTINATION

A. A DIFFERENT MOUNTAIN

1. MOUNT **SINAI**—REPLACED BY MOUNT **ZION**—IN THEIR MIDST
2. MOUNT ZION = TEMPLE MOUNT WHERE SACRIFICES WERE MADE
3. WHY ACCESS TO MOUNT ZION IS POSSIBLE
 - Christ’s sacrifice at Golgotha—Mount Calvary—cleanses us
 - He became Outcast—Scapegoat—killed on a hill *outside* the city
 - So that— we might come *into* the city

B. OUR DESTINY = THE CITY OF GOD—HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

1. CITY THAT ABRAHAM SOUGHT—BY FAITH
 - **Heb 11:10**—city with foundations—whose architect and builder is God
2. FUTURE PROMISE OF HEAVEN
 - **Rev 21:2**—*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*
3. THE CITY OF GOD = OUR FUTURE HOME
 - No longer—captives and slaves in Egyptian darkness

- No longer—sojourners wandering in earthly wilderness
- No longer—sinful outcasts—beyond walls of the city
- But friends—welcomed into the Holy City
- But a righteous community—invited into God’s very presence

4. MEANWHILE—WE ARE PILGRIMS

- Eyes set **not** on **earthly** shrines
 - o **Medieval Christian pilgrims—seeking relics and indulgences—The Way?**
 - o **Ex: Muslims—3 million travel to Mecca annually**
- Looking toward our eternal home—in the Father’s house—prepared by Jesus—**Jn 14:2**
- Stay **focused**—on **eternal**—not earthly
 - o On ‘things above’—**Col 3:1-2**—*where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God*
 - o On ‘unseen’— **II Cor 4:17-18**—*an eternal weight of glory far beyond comparison*
 - o On Christ—**Heb 12:2**—*the author and finisher of our faith*

WE’RE MARCHING TO ZION

Come, we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known
 Join in a song with sweet accord, and thus surround the throne
We’re marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion
We’re marching to Zion, the beautiful city of God
 Then let our songs abound, and every tear be dry
 We’re marching through Immanuel’s ground, to fairer worlds on high

V. THE CHURCH IS PART OF—A HEAVENLY COMMUNITY

A. THE DIVINE AND ANGELIC COMMUNITY

- ACCESS TO **DIVINE** PRESENCE—WE GO TO BE WITH
 - God—Judge of all
 - Everyone there has *already* passed His judgment—and belongs there!
 - The Righteous Protector—He secures safety of the City
 - Jesus—Mediator
 - He is the *reason* we are there!
 - The ‘Go-Between’—Who has closed the gap—and given us access
- LIVING AMONG **HEAVENLY HOSTS**
 - o Myriads of angels—unlimited number

- o Messengers to—and Protectors of—the church—[Rev 2-3](#)
- o Unlike angelic guards at Garden—they no longer keep us out—but welcome us in!

C. WE JOIN A HEAVENLY POPULATION

1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- o Two groups together—the living (**church**)—plus those who have died (**spirits**)
- o **Picture—whole congregation of Israel—past/present—gathered at Tabernacle**

2. SPIRITS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

- o Those already ‘made perfect’
- o **144,000**—symbolic of all glorified saints—[Rev 14:1](#)
- o **Family members who have passed on**

3. THE CHURCH

- o ‘**First-born**’—‘**enrolled**’ in Heaven
- o We follow **Christ**—‘the beginning, the **first-born** from the dead’—[Col 1:18](#)
- o Our citizenship is in heaven—not here—[Ph 3:20](#)
- o We are ‘fellow-citizens’—all of one house—[Eph 2:19ff](#)
- o Children of the Father’s House—prepared for us—[Jn 14](#)

VI. COMMUNAL PATH—EVERYONE IN CHURCH—ADMITTED THE SAME WAY

- ❖ **Mediation**
- ❖ **Sanctification**
- ❖ **Perfection**
- ❖ **Adoption**

A. MEDIATION

1. NO LONGER A GAP—BETWEEN SINNERS AND HOLY GOD
2. BREACH HEALED—BY CHRIST’S SACRIFICE—[Rom 5](#)
3. NOW HE IS OUR MEDIATOR—OF A NEW COVENANT—[verse 24](#)

B. SANCTIFICATION

1. OLD COVENANT—REPEATED SACRIFICES BY HUMAN PRIESTS
2. NEW COVENANT—ONE SACRIFICE FOR ALL SIN
 - a. Jesus said—*This is my blood of the covenant*—[Mk 14](#)

- b. His ‘sprinkled blood’—better than Abel’s sacrifice—**verse 24**
- c. Purifies us—makes us holy—sanctified—presentable to God

Heb 10:12-14—*but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.*

C. **PERFECTION**

- 1. Spirits of righteous made perfect—**verse 23**
- 2. Made into a **holy** priesthood—**I Pe 2**
 - A spiritual house—[in the kingdom of God]
 - **Purpose**—to serve as priests—to offer acceptable sacrifices to God

D. **ADOPTION**

- 1. ‘**Firstborn**’—enrolled in heaven
 - Allusion to Exodus—**firstborn**—freed from slavery
 - **Ex 4:22**—*Let my firstborn go—so that he may serve me*
 - **Purpose** of freedom—to be adopted—as God’s children

Rom 8:14-15—*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have **not** received a spirit of **slavery** leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of **adoption** as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”*

- 2. ‘**Enrolled**’—Jesus’ promise → *rejoice that your names are **recorded in heaven***—**Lk 10:20**
- 3. Names written in the **Book of Life**
 - Nothing unclean or sinful will ever enter Heaven
 - But only—*those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life*—**Rev 21:27**
 - **OUR PASSPORT—as Citizens of Heaven**

VII. CHURCH HAS COMMON EXPERIENCE—THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

- ❖ **Universal**
- ❖ **United**
- ❖ **Uniform**
- ❖ **Unified**

A. **UNIVERSAL CHURCH**

- 1. FROM ALL PEOPLE

- All nations and tongues come to Jerusalem—**Is 66**
 - **The** kings of the earth—glory of **all** nations—will enter heaven—**Rev 21**
2. BEYOND JUST THE LOCAL CHURCH

- **Global** Christianity—**universal invisible** church

3. OF ALL TIME

- a. **Mystical** body—connecting **earthly** and **glorified** saints
- b. We are *surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses*—**Heb 12:1**

B. UNITED CHURCH

1. CHURCH = BODY OF CHRIST [IS ONE]—**I COR 12**—CHRIST IS HEAD—**COL 1**
2. **ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM**—**ONE GOD & FATHER OF ALL**—**EPH 4:5**
3. NEITHER JEW/GREEK—SLAVE/FREE—MALE/FEMALE—**ONE IN CHRIST**—**GAL 3**
4. BROKEN WALL—NOT ALIENS—BUT **FELLOW CITIZENS WITH SAINTS**—**EPH 2**

C. UNIFORM CHURCH

1. ALL SAVED—BY *SAME GRACE*
2. ALL ENDOWED—WITH *SAME CHARACTER*
 - **Fruit of the Spirit**—**Gal 5**
3. ALL WEARING—*SAME CLOTHING*
 - Church **Militant**—on earth—**Armor of God**—**Eph 6**
 - Church **Triumphant**—in heaven—**Robes of Righteousness**—prophesied—**Is 61**
4. EQUIPPED WITH DIFFERENT GIFTS—FOR *SAME PURPOSES*
 - To **witness** and **glorify** Christ—**Jn 16**
 - To **obey** and **glorify** the Father—by bearing much fruit—**Jn 15**

D. UNIFIED CHURCH—IN **FELLOWSHIP**—**KOINONIA**

1. EXISTS—IN **KOINONIA WITH GOD**
 - o Called into **fellowship** with God's Son—**I Cor 1:9**
 - o We have **fellowship** in the Father and in Christ—**I Jn 1:3**
2. EXPERIENCES—**KOINONIA IN CHRIST**
 - o Experience His resurrection—and **fellowship** of His sufferings—**Ph 3**

- o If we walk in the light with Christ—we have **fellowship** together—**I Jn 1:7**
- 3. EXEMPLIFIED BY— **KOINONIA OF COMMUNION**
 - o **Communion** of bread and cup—**I Cor 10:16**
- 4. **KOINONIA**—CHARACTERIZED EARLY CHURCH
 - o Devoted to—Apostles’ teaching—**fellowship**—and breaking of bread—**Acts 2:42**
- 5. **KOINONIA**—PRODUCED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
 - o The Grace of our Lord—love of God—**fellowship** of the **Holy Spirit**—**II Cor 13:14**

VIII. WHY I BELIEVE THE CHURCH IS THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

- ❖ **IT EMBRACES DIVERSITY IN UNITY**
- ❖ **IT DEFIES HUMAN WISDOM—IT GROWS WHEN IT DIES**
- ❖ **IT HAS SURVIVED THROUGHOUT THE AGES—AND CONTINUES TO THRIVE**
- ❖ **ITS UNIVERSAL—IDENTITY—ADMISSION STANDARDS—EXPERIENCE**
- ❖ **ITS HEAVENLY DESTINY—THAT GIVES ME HOPE**
- ❖ **IT PROCLAIMS UNIQUE, UNEARTHLY MESSAGE—GRACE NOT WORKS**

IX. INVITATION

GRACE GREATER THAN OUR SIN

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
 grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
 Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
 there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

**Grace, grace, God's grace,
 Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
 Grace, grace, God's grace,
 Grace that is greater than all our sin!**

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
 threaten the soul with infinite loss;
 grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
 points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide.
 What can avail to wash it away?
 Look! There is flowing a crimson tide,
 brighter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
 freely bestowed on all who believe!

You that are longing to see his face,
will you this moment his grace receive?