

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Why Should I Be A Member Of A Local Church?

(Jerry Fite)

The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized upon his confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37-38). But of what local church did he become a member? He was saved and “went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39), but where do we read of him joining a local church?

Luke in his account of the eunuch’s conversion never tells us if he joined himself to a local congregation. However, Paul “assayed to join himself to the disciples” (Acts 9:26) following his baptism. After the disciples were convinced of his genuine discipleship through the facts presented by Barnabas, “he was with them going in and going out of Jerusalem” (Acts 9:28). At a later time, Paul was called from Tarsus to join Barnabas in Antioch. “For a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people” (Acts 11:26).

Joining oneself to fellow disciples comprising a local church is what Paul did. It is not difficult to believe the new convert from Ethiopia did the same

when he had the opportunity. The question is why should we join ourselves to the disciples in a local church when we become Christians? Did Paul have a need or responsibility as an apostle to join himself to other local disciples that the eunuch as a Christian does not have?

When we are baptized into Christ, the Lord adds us to the church in its universal sense (Acts 2:47). All of the saved the world over are added to the same spiritual body. The baptized believer in Pasadena is a member of the same church as the baptized believer in Manila. The relationship they have with one another is the common relationship they have in Christ.

God demands more from the Christian than just being members with others in the universal body of Christ. He demands we be “members one of another” (Rom. 12:5). This demand of God is accomplished on the local level in our daily interactions with other Christians. Our God-given gifts of teaching, serving, exhorting, giving, ruling and

showing mercy are exercised in the locality where we are, among the people we know need our gifts.

The local church in Rome was to manifest this “being members one of another” by “receiving one another” (Romans 14:1, 15:7). The Christian whose conscience would not allow him to eat certain meats needed to be received in the local church without creating for him an atmosphere of doubt. The Christian who knew all meats were clean needed to be received without condemnation for believing and practicing the truth. Having this mind toward one another is to the glory of God. Such interaction takes place locally where we live and eat.

We should be members of a local church to benefit from the spiritual oversight of elders. These qualified men watch over our souls, and only have authority to shepherd the local flock (Heb. 13:17, Acts 14:23, I Pet. 5:2). God organized the church on the local level for my spiritual and eternal benefit. I should therefore be member of a local church.