

## Who Makes Up The Church? (Acts 2:41-42)

For the past few months we have been considering what a Bible-believing, God-pleasing church is. We discovered that Jesus Christ is the owner of His church, since He bought it with His own blood (**Acts 20:28**). We also considered the fact that the church's power comes from the Gospel message, while its purpose is to give out that message in Jesus' name (**Matthew 16:16-19**).

Please remember that the word *church* means *assembly*. There are many that think of a building, when they hear this word, but should be thinking about a group of people that have congregated for the sole purpose of learning about Jesus Christ and serving Him (**Matthew 28:18-20**). This being true, we must cease to limit God's work to Sunday and incorporate it into our everyday living, if we are God's children.

### I. The Church Membership (Acts 2:41-42)

First, it must be mentioned that the term *church membership* does not exist in Scripture. This is a term that has come about in fairly recent days for various reasons and means different things, depending on the church's beliefs. The overall reason for the form of church membership we find in many churches today is due to laws that almost force each congregation to have it.

If we were to look back at the first days of the local church, we would see a mindset of belief in Christ, profession of faith in baptism, and an attitude of continuing with the saints in the doctrine of Christ. Today's weak Christianity knows little of this. We often see people profess belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and go no further with Him. Sometimes those believers will get baptized, but even some of them will go no further with Him. Even rarer are those that will believe in Jesus, get baptized, and continue with a Bible-believing church; which is the biblical pattern.

When the early church began, there was none of the church-hopping that we see today, because the people were much more serious about their belief in Jesus Christ. By making the decision to trust in Christ as their Savior, they were deciding to reject heathenism or Judaism to accept Jesus alone. This decision was not popular with the Romans or Jews and caused much persecution (**Acts 2-28**). The believers of that day relied on each other and continued in the Word of God as they followed the Lord Jesus in a world that hated them! How weak and pathetic God must think we are today to so often reject such dedication for the sake of comfort and carnality!

Second, we must acknowledge a difference between the so-called universal church and the local church. The universal church is given such a name, because it is simply an assembly of the saved through the ages. **Revelation 7:9-10** presents a group that no man could number of all nations, races, and languages that stand before the throne of God. This group seems to be the saved of all the ages that stand before Jesus and worship Him at the end of days. Now, this group does not make decisions as a body, nor does it assemble anywhere but Heaven; but it must be acknowledged for what it is: the complete body of Christ (**John 10:14-16; Romans 12:4-5; I Corinthians 12:12-14**).

The local church is similar, but different than the universal church. Whereas the body of Christ assembles nowhere but Heaven, the local church assembles locally and regularly on Earth. A *local* church is just that: it assembles in a specific location for the purpose of ministering to a specific area. Our church works hard to align with the biblical model for local churches. We believe that God put us in the Woodsboro area for a reason and so our ministry area is generally limited to Woodsboro and the surrounding towns (Thurmont, Frederick, Walkersville, Taneytown, etc.), unless special visitation

requests are made. We also encourage those Bible-believers that live in these areas to attend our church, or other Bible-believing churches, so that they might effectively minister to the local area God placed them in, instead of driving a long distance away to other churches that will never minister to their neighbors, families, and friends.

Last, we must understand that local church membership ought to be made up of a group of people that have performed two specific acts: they have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation (**Acts 16:31; John 3:16**) and have been baptized to identify with Him (**Romans 6:3-5; Acts 8:36-38**). We see these things clearly throughout Scripture and they cannot be ignored.

So, what about you? Do you attend a local, Bible-believing church that ministers to the local community by showing the love of Christ and preaching the Gospel? Are you looking for one? I encourage you to give our church family a try. We meet several times in the week to encourage, fellowship, pray, and learn God's Word together. Are you 100% certain that Heaven is your home, should something happen to you? If you have doubts, please email, visit, or call us. We are here to help 24/7.

*James Bussard is the pastor of Heritage Park Baptist Church that meets at 8 N. 2nd St. in Woodsboro, MD @ 11:30am on Sundays and throughout the week. For questions or comments about this article, please call (301) 304-2127 or write him at [HeritageParkPastor@Gmail.com](mailto:HeritageParkPastor@Gmail.com). For more service times and information about the church, please go to [www.FrederickforChrist.com](http://www.FrederickforChrist.com) or call (301) 304-2127.*