

### **III. THE OCCUPANTS AND OBJECTIVE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**

#### **A. WHO IS A PART OF THE CHURCH?**

1. The membership of a church consists of persons who have professed faith in Christ, obeyed the Lord's command regarding baptism and united themselves in the fellowship of a local assembly in which to serve the Lord and carry out His will (Acts 2:41).
2. Since there's no way to know what's in a person's heart, people can become members of a local assembly by making false professions of faith (Acts 8:13,21; Matt. 13:24-30). Oftentimes these fall by the wayside when trials occur (Jn. 6:25-27; Matt. 13:5,6,20,21; Jn. 6:60-66; I Jn. 2:19).
3. A local church should insist upon a clear profession of faith in Christ and baptism when receiving members and not just accept people who give no evidence of regeneration (Jude 4; Rev. 2:2; Acts 2:41). Some preachers say: "if anyone wants to unite with the church today, come forward." But to receive members on this basis is to condemn a person and make it ten times harder for him to ever be saved. Note this is what the Pharisees did (Matt. 23:15).
4. When persons give evidence of regeneration and have been baptized they should be voted into the fellowship. There is no reference to this practice but this was the method employed in all other decisions concerning the church. It was used to elect individuals to do certain things (Acts 6:3,5; 11:29,30; 15:2,3,22). It was also used to excommunicate a member (I Cor. 5:4,5,13).

#### **B. WHY SHOULD A PERSON BECOME A MEMBER IN A LOCAL ASSEMBLY SINCE THE CHURCH COMPRISES BELIEVERS EVERYWHERE?**

1. All those who are truly born-again believers are part of the universal aspect of the church.
2. Notice there is no Scriptural support for belonging to the universal church apart from membership in a local assembly. It is also incorrect to refer to the universal aspect of the church as being the invisible church. The N.T. church is a visible local assembly which meets at a particular place and time and comprises an assembly of real people (Rev. 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14).
3. It should be noted also that just as baptism identifies a person with the Lord's death for him, church membership identifies a person with the Lord's people.

Someone has said, "If baptism is the first step of obedience in serving the Lord, then membership in a local assembly is the second step." Notice also that a person is either wholly obedient or he is disobedient, he cannot be 1/3 or 2/3 obedient (Acts 2:41).

4. It follows then if a person is a genuine believer in the Lord, he is disobedient if he refuses to join a local assembly and identify with the Lord's people and program of the church.

### **C. WHY SHOULD THE MEMBERS OF A LOCAL CHURCH MEET ON A REGULAR BASIS?**

1. Members of a local assembly should meet to worship the Lord (Acts 2:42; 4:23-31) Note Rev. 4:10,11.
2. Members should meet for fellowship and prayer (Acts 2:42; 4:23-31).
3. Members should meet to exercise individual spiritual gifts for the edification of one another (Acts 13:1; 9:31; I Cor. 12:1-32; 14:23-26).
4. Members should meet to study God's Word and receive spiritual nourishment (I Pet. 2:2; II Tim. 2:15).
5. Members should meet to make decisions concerning the Lord's will (I Cor. 5:4,5) and to involve themselves in good works (Acts 11:27-30; Gal. 6:10; Rev. 2:5).
6. Members should meet to observe the Lord's supper and stay in fellowship with the Lord (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-26).
7. Members should meet to set a good example for the lost in a community and to aid in carrying out the great commission (Matt. 28:19,20). If for not other reason to let others know whose side you're on!