1 - **Membership In The Local Church**

Acts 9:26-31

2 - **What happens when someone is baptized?**

* Beyond **forgiveness, redemption and sanctification**, God’s word says they are “***added***” to something. **Acts 2:41, 47**
* Greek word “**prostithemi**”-“place additionally” (Strong’s) – “**to add or place beside**” (Vines)
* From where we get our English word ‘**prosthesis’** or ‘**prosthetics’.**

3 - **Added to what?**

* **To the church** (the **“called out”**) or the ***“body”.*** (Eph. 2:19-22; Col. 1:18-24)
* **To the kingdom** – (Isaiah 2:2-3; Daniel 2:44)
* To **God’s family and household**. (Romans 8:9-11)
* **Enrolled** with those whose names are in the ***“book of life”.*** (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 20:12-15; Heb. 12:22-23)
* **To the number of the saved –** Individually members of one body (Acts 2:47; Romans12:3-5)

4 –

We do not **JOIN** the Lord’s church – we are **ADDED**!

**We are not added to the church of our choice!**

We are added to **His church**, with **His rule**, with **His work**, and **His worship**.

5 - **The Church “Universal”**

* An accommodative used to describe a relationship between **Christ as the head** and **all those (all places in all times) who have been redeemed as part of the body (Ephesians 1:22-23)**.
* **To be part of this body**, we must be brought into ***fellowship*** ***with God*** and when we do, **we are also brought into fellowship** with **all those** who also are in **fellowship with God** & who continue to **walk in the light** (**1 John 1:1-7**).

6 - **There’s More Than Being Added**

* The scriptures also teach that the Christian is to be a functional part of a **local** church.
* From the very inception of the church, we see that there are matters that we must continue in **that involve a local group of Christians** as we read of in Acts 2:42.
* **33 local churches** mentioned in the NT. (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:27; 1 Corinthians 11:18)

7 - **What Is Our Responsibility?**

* **We individually bear the responsibility to** **“join” ourselves to a local congregation** to **work and labor** together with brethren in a specified location.
* While **the Lord adds one to His church**, **one *must* identify with (join himself to) a local church**.

8 - **What is to be the basis for our choosing a congregation to identify with?**

On what basis will we choose a local church to join ourselves to? What are we looking for?

* + **Physical** - How big? Number? Building or facilities? Formal or informal?
	+ **Social -** Friendliness? Activities?
	+ **Spiritual** - Stand for truth? Agree to disagree? Preach what I want to hear

9 - **Consider Saul after he became a Christian.**

**Acts 9:26-27, “***And when he had come to Jerusalem,* ***he was trying to associate******with (join) the disciples****; and* ***they were all afraid of him****,* ***not believing that he was a disciple***.”

10 - **Saul attempts to join himself to the congregation in Jerusalem**

* What does it mean to “**join**” a group of local Christians?
* **The word translated “associate” in the NASV is rendered "join" ASV & KJV - in the Greek ‘kollao’**.
* **Kollao** is simply defined as, "**To** **glue or cement together**, then, generally, to **unite**, to **join firmly**…" (**Vine**).
* This word is observed in the Greek NT as **descriptive of close and intimate relationships**.

11 –

* For example - This is the word (kollao)Jesus used when describing the intimate fleshly **relationship of husband and wife**(Matt. 19:5; cf., Acts 5:13).
* Thus, **kollao** is **indicative** of the importance and the **nature of membership** in the local church. It’s a **close, dedicated, and committed relationship** that a member has with fellow members of a local church.

12 - ***Joining oneself*** to a local church – it’s serious!

* We should take seriously our responsibility as an **identifiable and contributing part of a congregation.**
* **Membership has it’s privileges**. And it’s responsibilities!
* The local church doesn’t work **when the parts don’t come together as a whole**. Ephesians 4:16;
Colossians 2:19 (“…the joints and ligaments…”)
* Each member is to view him or herself as both a **donor** and a **beneficiary** in the body of the local congregation.

13 –

Therefore, a Christian who has joined himself to a local congregation, is **not one** who –

* Is **ready to leave at the sign of any problems**,
* **Looks for a reason to unglue** their relationship with their brethren.
* Forgets the **devotion and commitment** that is involved in “joining" (kollao) a congregation.

14 - **Saul and his attempt to join the brethren in Jerusalem**

* **God’s word teaches that “*Fellowship*” (joining other Christians) is a conditional matter**
(Eph. 5:10-11, 2 John 9-11). Only those "***walking in the light***" are to be fellowshipped and “***joined***” together with (1 John 1:7).
* **Barnabas offered proof that Saul was a faithful Christian, one to whom they should extend fellowship and membership** Acts 9:27).

15 –

**Unconditional fellowship** (“joining”) (w/o regard to one’s fellowship with God & abiding in the doctrine of Christ; i.e., 2 John 9) **is not only unscriptural**, but it also contributes to **division** and **dangerous** **leaven spreading** through the church.

16 –

There is a **twofold responsibility**:

* It is the **responsibility of the Christian** to "**join himself**" to a faithful group of Christians who practice and stand for the truth and
* It is **the duty of elders and the local church to watch for “*savage wolves*” that might come in (join themselves to) and not spare the flock”. (Acts 20:7)**

17 - **How important is church membership?**

* One cannot be a faithful Christian w/o being a faithful, dedicated & contributing member of a faithful local church.
* Does not in any way advocate denominationalism, but rather condemns it (1 Cor. 4:17).
* Many churches, teaching diversified doctrines is contrary to the scriptures (1 Cor. 1:10ff).
* Nonetheless, pure and biblical Christianity demands one be an active member of a scriptural local church, one teaching and practicing only the "*doctrine of Christ*" (2 Jn. 9-11).