

THE CHURCH: HOW DOES ONE BECOME A MEMBER? (Conc.)

In answering this question previously, we wrote, “Positively, since the church consists of those saved from sin, becoming a member of it is as simple, but as vital, as obeying the gospel to be saved (Acts 2, especially verses 37-38, 41, 47).” We asked, “Is it really this simple?”

Now, we would like to demonstrate that it really is this simple—and vital to our spiritual wellbeing.

Let’s begin by examining the passages cited above. The occasion recorded at Acts 2 was the Jewish feast day of Pentecost. This particular occasion immediately followed the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. That day the Holy Spirit empowered Peter and the rest of the apostles to preach the gospel to this gathering of people who, but a short time before, were complicit in crucifying Jesus, the Son of God. Many of them were convicted of their sin and asked what to do. Obviously, they were asking for relief from the burden of their guilt. Peter instructed them to repent and be baptized “...in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins....” That day, three thousand responded to this instruction and were added to the number of God’s people (his called out ones), the church.

The church is the sum total of God’s called out people. That is the meaning of the Greek term *ekklesia* for which the word church is supplied in our English translations of the New Testament. How, then, does God call mankind? Paul answered clearly when he wrote concerning the Thessalonians’ sanctification by the Spirit and belief of the truth, saying “to which you were CALLED BY OUR GOSPEL...” (II Thessalonians 2:14, emphasis added). Further, this call is not limited to a certain predetermined number of people. It is open to as many as Jesus Christ sent his apostles to teach—everyone. “Go into all the world,” he commanded his apostles, “and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). Thus, the salvation of the gospel of Christ is open to everyone who will exercise his God given freewill and accept it.

The church is the body of the saved (Ephesians 5:23). Becoming a member of it is as simple—and vital—as obeying the gospel to be saved. Thus, your being saved and a member of this body awaits only your obedience to the gospel of Christ.

—Jerry F. Bassett