

EAST CAMBRIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

“A first century church in the 21st century”

Bible Reading Plan

Week 51

- Job 12-14; Ps 100; *Rev 13*
- Job 15-17; *Rev 14*
- Job 18-20; Ps 141; *Rev 15*
- Job 21-23; Ps 101; *Rev 16*
- Job 24-27; *Rev 17*

Leading Services

Announcements: Larry L.

Morning:

Song Leader: Mike V.

Opening Prayer: Richard L.

Lord's Table: Brock G.

Asst By:

Closing Prayer: Bill G.

Evening:

Song Leader: Bill G.

Opening Prayer: Mike V.

Closing Prayer: Brock G.

Scripture Reading: Richard L.
(Matthew 3:1-12)

Sermons

AM: Christmas, Can I Celebrate The Holiday?



Membership

Sometimes questions arise as to whether it is scripturally necessary, or even scripturally permissible, to “place membership” with a congregation. A modern brother or sister may raise the objection: “I’m a member of the church of Christ, and that’s good enough for me.” What this person means is: “I am a member of the universal church of Christ, but I have no interest in serving in a local congregation.” Others seem to believe that placing membership is a denominational concept, rather than a Scriptural concept. However, the term simply means to identify oneself with a local congregation.

Please consider a few reasons why it is both Scripturally permissible and Scripturally necessary to place membership with a faithful church of Christ after leaving another.

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Placing membership

Each Christian Is a Member of a Congregation

In the New Testament, each first-century Christian is understood to be a member of a particular congregation. The New Testament does speak of the universal church of Christ, into which the Lord adds the saved when they are baptized (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 5:23). However, far and away, the New Testament most often uses “church” to refer to the local congregation (Acts 14:27; 20:17; Romans 16:1, 23).

Paul wrote to the “saints which are at Ephesus” (Ephesians 1:1). Here it is expressed that he wrote to “saints,” or Christians – but were they not saints who were members of the local church at Ephesus? He wrote “unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (I Corinthians 1:2). “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thessalonians 1:1). Whether Paul addressed “the saints at [whatever location]” or “the church at [whatever location],” he was addressing the same group.

Each Christian Is to Function in the Church

Members are responsible to function within the body (Romans 12:5; I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:16), and the body functions within each local congregation. There is no larger organizational structure of the church (compare with Philippians 1:1). If we do not function within a local church, we do not function within the church at all.

Each Christian Is to Submit to the Elders

Christians have the responsibility to submit to local leadership, while each eldership has the responsibility to oversee the flock they are among (Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2). If one never submits to an eldership, he never complies with his responsibility to submit to an eldership, and he hinders elders from performing their responsibility to oversee the flock.

Each Christian Identified with a Local Congregation

After Saul was converted and returned to Jerusalem, he knew he had to identify himself with the congregation there. This is why “he assayed to join himself to the disciples” there (Acts 9:26). There is no difference between this and what is sometimes called “placing membership.” If Saul saw the need to identify himself with a faithful congregation where he was living, why would we not have the same need? If one lives in an area where there are no faithful congregations, placing membership is obviously not an option. In such instances, one should again do what the first century Christians did, and establish congregations in those areas (compare with Acts 8:4ff; 11:19-21). Otherwise, placing membership is both scripturally permissible and scripturally necessary.

- Lee Moses