

## Wisdom in God's Plan

Those “*baptized into Christ*” (Gal. 3:27) are “*added to the church*” (Acts 2:47), and become a part of that saved relationship, or a member of “the church” in its universal sense.

But the church universal has no earthly organization, no human head, and can not assemble for worship in “*one place*” (I Cor. 14:23) to worship God. Consequently, congregations, or **local** churches with their own local officers (Phil. 1:1) were established in places where souls had obeyed the gospel. Cf. Acts 14:21-23.

Different letters were written to various local churches in which the responsibilities and duties of Christians in the local church are set forth. Elders are to “*feed the flock of God...among*” them, I Peter 5:2. Christians are to “*obey*” and “*submit*” to those who “*have the rule over*” them (Heb. 13:17). Saints are to lay by “*in store*” (place into the common local treasury) according to their prosperity (I Cor. 16:1-2). Other duties in the congregational capacity could be cited.

There is wisdom in this plan. This means that faithful elders will not assume oversight of brotherhood projects. It means that devoted Christians will not be “members at large,” but will function properly in the congregational relationship as members of a local church. It means that even when members, who by reason of sickness or who for some reason are away from the local services on the Lord's day, will “make up” their contribution, realizing that the work of the local church must go on nevertheless, and that this work must be supported by the local members. Such members will realize that outward circumstances do not make void the necessity of their supporting the local work according to ability and opportunity.

Further wisdom is seen in this plan in the fact that the divine arrangement calls for congregational autonomy and congregational independence. It means that the apostasy of one congregation does not necessarily demand an apostasy in another congregation, and that with the concurrent, independent cooperation and work of every congregation, the world over can be scripturally evangelized.

God's **plan** is worthy of our respect, and His **work** is worthy of our participation. Let us engage therein!

\*\*\* —B. Witherington