

Where Would Saul (Paul) Go?

This effort is not intended to question or debate the timeline of the apostle Paul from the moment of his arriving in Damascus, leaving Damascus, going into Arabia, returning to Damascus and “after three years” going up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and any other associated questions from Galatians 1. This is simply a question derived from the stated facts of Acts 9:26, namely, “And when he was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples.”

When inquiry concerning “church membership” ensues, two statements emerge: 1) An individual cannot “join” the church (universal), “the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved” (Acts 2:41, 47). 2) Although an individual cannot “join the church” (universal), there is some arrangement between brethren where an agreement to work together (fellowship, Acts 2:42) develops, i.e., “And he (Saul, 9:23, 26) was with them (the disciples, 9:26) going in and going out at Jerusalem,” (9:28). In short, Saul (Paul) arrives in Jerusalem and “was trying to associate with the disciples” (NASV).

Here is the question: If the apostle Paul were to visit your community, with whom would he be “trying to associate”? Where would Paul find “the disciples”? Even in an ecumenical community, which group would say, “go there, or go anywhere you choose,” and not, “Behold, here are the disciples!”

Is it relatively safe to say, “All Christ based denominations, and/or groups affirm that they believe and teach the Bible, and only the Bible, as their rule of faith?” The proof, as some are wont to say, is in the pudding. If one group of disciples is as good as another, and it makes no difference with which one associates, then why does “the whole” not “assemble together”? (1 Cor. 14:23).

What accounts for the divisions? The simple answer: Doctrine and Practice!

Paul said to the church in Corinth, “Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos: and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:10-13) To which, “Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals. Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame” (1 Cor. 15:33-34).

So, back to our question: “If the apostle Paul were to visit your community, with whom would he be “trying to associate”?

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