

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Mr. Obama's Church Decision

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In a recent “One-on-One” interview with NBC’s Matt Lauer, President Obama was asked whether or not he had made a decision to join a church in Washington D.C. He responded with “*as of now, we have decided not to join a single church. . .*”. The reason Mr. Obama gives is that he and Michelle agree that they “*are very disruptive to services.*” But do not think our President is lacking spiritual nourishment because he states that a “*group of pastors*” continue their “*prayer circle*” for him which they started when he was running for the presidency. They are a “*wonderful group*” made up of “*very conservative pastors and very liberal pastors*” who “*pray for him, Michelle and the girls.*” “*They send me daily devotionals to my Blackberry*” Mr. Obama gladly proclaims, and adds that such is “*a wonderful thing.*”

I am not sure President Obama is unique in being disruptive to the worship services in Washington D.C. His predecessors probably demanded the same extra security and likewise attracted the news media when they attended the weekly services throughout their terms in office.

While not unique, I guess we can appreciate our President’s concern for not hurting the religious experience of the other attendees.

The apostle Paul was definitely disruptive to religious gatherings in his time, but sought and gained membership in a local church. He was fleeing Damascus after confounding the Jews, proving Jesus to be Christ. With his sights on Jerusalem, he “*assayed to join himself to the disciples*” (Acts 9:26). When he learns the Christians in Jerusalem are “*afraid of him*”, he does not withdraw his name or say, “*At this time I have decided not to join a single church.*” He allows Barnabas to speak on his behalf. After convincing the brethren of his legitimacy as a Christian, they accepted him. “*And he was with them going in and coming out at Jerusalem*” (Acts 9:28).

Like many in our society, President Obama feels comfortable with the concept we can be acceptable to God without being a member of the Lord’s church, if we are spiritual. After all, if we are receiving daily devotionals on our Blackberry, we are receiving religious instruction designed to give us spiritual strength. We do not

need to belong to a particular church. As we have seen, the apostle Paul did not have such a concept.

Early Christians under the teaching of the apostles knew membership and faithful attendance in a local church were not merely about what we receive, but the encouragement we give others by our attendance. “*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; as so much the more as you see the day drawing nigh*” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Imagine what it would be like if the President of the United States were a Christian according to the true teachings of New Testament. Like Paul, he would be a member of a local church, and partake of the Lord’s supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). He and his family would be actively arousing love and good works in others through their attendance and participation in the worship services. This would be wonderful. !