

Where May We Eat the Lord's Supper?

Written by Steve Watts

God intended for local congregations to be established. The New Testament teaches the local congregation worshipped and preached "as the oracles of God." In the local congregation, there was leadership, and the members were subject to that leadership. The commands of worship were given to the local congregations. The church, or body, does not worship on the universal level but on the local level. Herein we refute the government of religions having one central governing body as the pope or any other who would place several congregations under the authority of one man or a centralized group.

Paul called the elders of the local congregation at Ephesus together and reminded them to "feed the church of God over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers." Here we have a local congregation (church government), and a body (members) subject to that government. Hebrews 13:17 gives instruction to "obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls."

Numerous other passages point to the fact of the local congregation being a complete unit in the family of God. Revelations, chapters 2 and 3 name a number of local congregations and each congregation was responsible for themselves.

Congregational Rules of Assembly

God's Word is the exclusive source of truth. It contains the patterns acceptable for each item of worship. One should bear in mind, worship can and has through the ages been polluted. Any of God's commands relegated by man places man in violation of law. "Sin is the transgression of law."

A rule of assembly is found in Hebrews 10:25. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." The original episunagoge, carries the meaning: "a gathering together in one place, a complete collection, assembling or gathering together." This is the rule some were violating. This does not command, "Do not forsake the Lord's Supper, or singing, or prayer, or giving," but "do not forsake gathering TOGETHER!"

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One could keep the command to "remember the Lord's death till he comes" and still violate the command of "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." God, not man, put the body "together" in worship. Some were "forsaking coming together" and this was and still is a violation of law. They could have been busy on a job, vacation, visiting friends, etc. If it was just worship, He would have expressed it so, yet it was the members' obligation to be "together" in worship.

Examples of the Early Church

The examples of the early church speak volumes. They gathered together to worship. They were commanded to do so. The early church knew this. Notice these examples. 1 Corinthians 11:20, "when ye come TOGETHER therefore into one place." 1 Corinthians 14:23, "if therefore the whole church be come TOGETHER into one place." Acts 11:26, "a whole year they assembled themselves with the church." The substance shows the local church gathered in one place. This is the Biblical example. See also 1 Corinthians 14:19, Romans 16:5-6 and 1 Corinthians 14:31.

Specific items of worship can also be noted. Hebrews 2:12 places singing "in the midst of the church." When addressing the Lord's Supper, Paul begins, "when you come together in the church" (1 Cor. 11:18). Still addressing the memorial he states, "when you come together into one place." He condemns some of their practices and sets in order the commands of God ending again with the same thought of Hebrews 10:25. It teaches to gather together and Paul adds additional law in 1 Corinthians 11:33, "My brethren when you come together to eat (communion), TARRY one for another." Tarry is defined by Strong's as "wait for." Acts 20:7 reads, "upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread." Since there is no other example, command, statement, or inference in the New Testament concerning the time of communion, we accept this as the exclusive time of communion. Rightfully so.

In view of 1 Corinthians 11:33 and Hebrews 10:25, we have the rules of the Lord's Supper. We are to "gather together, and wait and eat together." God taught the local body concept of the church and the requirement for each part to be there. "We are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). Israel partook of the one lamb, the Passover which they killed. Many lambs were killed, but only one lamb per assembly.

Paul and others would leave one local church to go and establish a new congregation. These few and their new converts were the local church in that new area. Their responsibility was to

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that congregation. They were to have a treasury, fulfill their responsibility in spreading the gospel, accept their obligations of benevolence, and worship God. On the Lord's day, as the body of Christ, they were to gather and eat the Lord's Supper together.

Conclusion

Dividing the local congregation into fragmented worship will produce a multiplicity of treasuries, a congregation not gathering together to eat together, and will promote the absence of the members.

May we visit another church? May a few of us start a new church? Yes, because you will be gathering together in one place with the local church.

"The body is one and has many members." The number one (a primary number) means first in importance and first in position. It shares that position with no other. It stands independent of all others and this is precisely the way the Lord established his body. In every place where the church exists, it is one, primary, first in importance and first in position. —582 Murry Kittrell Rd, Readyville, TN 37149