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Description

Why Are There Interdependent Assemblies Gathered on the Ground of the One Body, Only to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Why do we fellowship at such an assembly? Often the singing is far from outstanding, and there are no pipe organs, bands and choirs to entertain us. Most assemblies do not have trained speakers, nor are there eloquent, practiced sermons, often aimed to please and seldom to offend. We don't have trained youth pastors or large facilities where lots of naturally-pleasing activities are found-pleasing to the old nature. It's not because we have big crowds out of which we can find just the friend or friends we want. It's not because there have never been offenses. It's not because of the beautiful, ornate building. It's certainly not because there never are any problems that come up and it's not because every problem is perfectly solved! What then is the reason or reasons? In one sentence, it's because the Word of God is kept there, taught there and practiced there, although often imperfectly! In more detail, it's .

1. Because the Lord said the ground of gathering for His people is the One Body (1 Cor.10 and 12), the body of Christ, not a denomination! It's His Church (Mt.16:18); He is its Head (Col.1:18). He gives the directions for, and controls His Church. Man has substituted all around us his directions and thoughts instead of simply searching out and obeying the Lord's directions! Even though man's thoughts generally please man-the sinful nature-these human thoughts and ideas do not please God. Are we concerned? Do we care? We guarantee He cares! Such assemblies gather on the scriptural ground of the one body.

2. Because the Lord said Christians are to gather to His name alone (Mt.18:20)! Thus we are not to take a name or gather to a name not common to all Christians. We don't gather to the name of any ordinary man like Martin Luther, as great as he was (who specifically asked that no "church" be named after him). We don't gather to some doctrine like baptism, as important as that doctrine might be. We don't gather to some form of Church order like Presbyterianism, as important as scriptural "church" order is. No, we are only authorized to gather to one name, that of our Lord Jesus! He intended His name to be the common gathering Center of all believers. So the believers at such assemblies consider themselves simply as groups of Christians, of brethren in Christ, of believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, who seek to fulfill the Lord's directions for "church" or "assembly" gathering. That is much more than owning Christ as Lord and Savior, which every true Christian does.

3. Because the Lord's model for His Church is one Church with many local assemblies (or local churches) all meeting together as part of the One Body, just as the many branch offices of a large corporation all represent the parent company, though scattered around the world! Thus there is to be unity among assemblies (1 Cor.1:2; 4:17; 12:12-13), not independency. The local assembly is to represent the entire Church of God (1 Cor.12:27) in the local community. Today most religious groups operate either on the principle of independency of other groups, or as part of a man-made system smaller than the one body of Christ, or the very rigid (but unscriptural) hierarchical system of for example the Roman Catholic "church." We cannot fellowship with independency which is a denial of God's truth as to His Church, or with man-made systems.

4. Because God says that all believers are priests and are given the privilege of both worship and proclaiming Christ (1 Pet.2:5,9)! The Holy Spirit is to be free to use whomever He wills (1 Cor.12:11). Almost everywhere today, the human system of unscriptural clergy and laity robs the believer of his or her priesthood privileges and responsibilities. God indicates He hates the clergy-laity system, not the people in it (Rev.2:6,15). The Greek word *nicolaitan* means "conquering the laity," speaking of some usurping authority over others (3 Jn.9-11). In most denominations, consider how far you'd get if you stood up to pray during the so-called "communion service." Or to give thanks for the bread and wine? Or to read a portion of Scripture dealing with the Lord's suffering and death? The "laity" is not qualified to do such things, so the "system" and its "clergy" think!

5. Because God says all believers have one or more spiritual gifts from the ascended Lord to be used for the profit of all (Rom.12:6-8; 1 Cor.12:4-7,11, 18; 1 Pet.4:10-11)! Having the gift is God's authorization to use it in an orderly way as the Holy Spirit leads (1 Cor.14:29,33,40; 1 Pet.4:10-11). There is no "laity" in Christianity, that is, no common people in the things of God (Eph.4:7,16). Today, almost universally, one's gift is usurped, at least in the meetings of the local church, by the pastor or reverend or elder who is supposed to have all the gifts. The man-made system doesn't allow the Holy Spirit to choose whomever He wills! How far do you think you'd get in such man-made systems in teaching "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) when that teaching would undermine the "belief" and "practice" of that denomination or group? If the "pastor" or "elder" was a God-gifted teacher, you might get some good teaching, but never the whole counsel of God, because people won't undermine their own unscriptural position. Assemblies where we fellowship have nothing to undermine since their only creed is the entire Word of God.

6. Because God has different roles for men and women (Eph.5:22-33) which are increasingly violated or ignored in the Christian religious

systems around us. There are to be differences in head coverings and hair length (1 Cor.11:2-5,14) due to God's order in headship. God's order of headship is God, Christ as Man, man, woman, children (1 Cor.11; Eph.6:1). Women are to be silent in the "assembly meetings" (1 Cor.14:34) and always be in quietness (1 Tim.2:12, JND)-that, is, not causing a fuss. Women are not to teach or usurp authority over the man (1 Tim.2:12), although women may well have a teaching gift to be used in other circumstances (Acts 21:9) than the assembly setting. Christ (pictured by the man) teaches His Church (pictured by the woman); the Church never teaches Christ! See more of this man (Christ) – woman (Church) picture in Ephesians 5:22- 33. Why should not men and women gladly bow to God's distinctions, pictures and order without controversy, simply because their Lord has said so? How can one associate with a system which ignores or tries to sidestep God's order? Even the angels watch how God's order is maintained by the obedience of the brothers and sisters (1 Cor.11:10; Eph.3:10).

7. Because the Lord's order is for His own to remember Him in His death, in dying for their sins, by "breaking bread" every week (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor.11:24-25)! It is a very holy ordinance, not to be partaken of by the unsaved or in a light or careless manner (1 Cor.11:27-34). Otherwise, there are possible serious consequences. If there is something in your life that would bring God's discipline, then it is better not to break bread; better still to correct the situation and then break bread in obedience to, and to please your Savior. Breaking of bread is to only occur where the apostles' doctrine is maintained (Acts 2:42-note the order of the items mentioned). It also is the outward expression of fellowship together (1 Cor.10:16-17). In some groups, almost anyone who claims he is a Christian can break bread regardless of how he lives his life, unless perhaps for open sin of the most grievous kind. Other groups have even fewer restrictions. Furthermore, generally, the breaking of bread is held once a month or less often because man thinks it would become too commonplace. Does man or God know better? Don't we need to be reminded of who Christ is and what Christ has done for us, week by week?

8. Because God insists on purity in morals, doctrine and associations of those who meet together in a God-honoring assembly (1 Tim.3:15) where we are to behave ourselves! Love to God is shown by obedience even in difficult matters (1 Jn.5:2-3; 1 Sam.15:22-23), rather than doing various things that one thinks please Him. Resolve problems (Mt.18:15-18)! Warn the unruly (1 Th.5:14)! Use shepherd care (Gal.6:1-2; 1 Th.5:14)! Withdraw from those who continue to be disorderly (2 Th.3:6) or associate themselves with such people! Excommunicate (put away from fellowship) those with serious unresolved sin (1 Cor.5:11-13) because God says such sin spreads (1 Cor.5:6; Gal.5:9) and it is an affront to His holiness! Follow righteousness, faith, love, peace after departing from iniquity-that which is not right before God-with likeminded believers (2 Tim.2:19-22). Many Christian systems around us have practically no discipline except perhaps for the most serious and open sins. How can we associate with such? We are to read the Bible to know how we are to conduct ourselves in the house of God which is the Church of the living God (1 Tim.3:15). God has rules for His house (the house-aspect of the Church where there is to be proper order). Do you care about His rules, about doing things His way, doing things the right way?

9. Because God's order is to have Holy Spirit-chosen elders (Acts 20:28; 1 Th.5:12; 1 Tim.3 JND translation) who oversee and lead the assembly in the right way! The assembly does not choose them; the Holy Spirit does (Acts 20:28). The assembly recognizes them by their work and godliness. They have no authority beyond the moral authority of the Word. Religious authority is only in the assembly as gathered to act in the Lord's name, according to the Lord's directions (1 Cor.5:4-5). In many Christian religious groups around us, elders are appointed by man and often rule (sometimes severely). In some denominations elders are falsely presumed by some twisted logic to be the same as the pastor of a denominational church. Elders may or may not have a teaching gift.

There are other scriptural reasons why thousands of assemblies walk together on scriptural ground around the world, but these nine reasons are sufficient for this outline. You won't find these things practiced in the systems of men around us. There are many lovely, personally godly Christians in those systems, but they are not pleasing God in their collective walk because they are not walking according to God's directions.

Finally, for each of us personally, God says, "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as is the manner of some" (Heb.10:25). Are you like those "some"? If so, why are you not at the breaking of bread meeting? Why not at the preaching meeting? Why not at the ministry meeting (1 Cor.14:29-33)? Why not at the assembly Bible study? And of great importance, why not at the power (prayer) meeting? And the Sunday School!

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