

# THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

One of the functions God has designed for each local church is for it to assemble (gather). There is no such earthly gathering of the universal church. During these gatherings, the Scriptures teach certain things that ought to be done in worship to God. Rather than focus on these during this lesson, we will be focused on the importance and nature of these assemblies themselves.

## COLOSSIANS 4:15-16

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The term “church” refers to a collection of people. Consider its use in Acts 19:32, 39, 41 concerning the assembly of people protesting Paul in Ephesus due to his preaching against their false god. But, it is most commonly used in the New Testament for the community of people who are devoted to Jesus. Particularly, it can be used to describe when this local church gathers in one place. Notice the Laodicean church being referenced as assembling in Nympha’s home (compare with Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19). Then, the Colossian church was to read Paul’s letter among them (i.e. when they were gathered). Their gatherings likely took place in Philemon’s home (Philemon 1:2). So, just as the congregation of Israelites in the Old Testament were to all assemble in Jerusalem at specified times (Leviticus 23), local congregations of Christians were expected to gather in the same place at the same time.

## ACTS 20:7

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This passage demonstrates a specific time the local church in Troas assembled. The specificity of this passage concerning the first day of the week is noteworthy for a few reasons. First, though Paul waited in Troas (Acts 20:6), there was something special about the first day of the week. Second, there were specific things that took place during this first day of the week assembly (the Lord’s

Supper and preaching). Third, this is not the only Scripture reference that indicates New Testament churches gathered on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Fourth, the first day of the week was historically significant for Christians as the day Jesus rose from the dead (Matthew 28:1-10) and the church began (Acts 2:1-47). So, while Jews were taught to keep the Sabbath (seventh) Day, Christians are shown the pattern of assembling on the first day!

## 1 CORINTHIANS 14:23-40

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This passage demonstrates that the whole church in Corinth assembled at specific times (including the first day of the week, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Paul had been addressing the proper use of miraculous spiritual gifts that were in use and important to the church at that time (1 Corinthians 12-14) but would stop once the perfect (the completed New Testament Scriptures) would come (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). At this time, these miraculous gifts were useful in knowing and teaching the will of God (as they did not have the completed New Testament to study and teach). Though many things in this chapter specifically relate to the use of miraculous spiritual gifts, there are some larger principles to apply to church assemblies today. First, there are times when God desires the entire local church to assemble in one place at one time (vv. 23, 26; i.e. on the first day of the week). Second, the assemblies of the church are intended to bring glory to God by people worshiping Him (v. 25). Third, everything in the assemblies of the church is intended to spiritually build up those who are gathered (v. 26). Fourth, women are not permitted to speak in the assemblies of the church (vv. 34-35). Fifth, everything that is done in the assemblies is to be done decently and orderly so that there is no chaos and confusion (vv. 33, 40).

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-14

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As demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, God has set restrictions as it relates to the role of women in the church assemblies. They are not permitted to speak in the assemblies (though

participating in the congregational singing is permitted and expected, Ephesians 5:19). Paul (by the authority of Christ) said that a woman is not permitted to teach or have authority over a man, but to remain quiet and learn in submission. This certainly applies to women leading in the church assemblies and preaching. The reasons given for this prohibition are identified as: The order of creation (man then woman) and the order of transgression (woman then man). These reasons are timeless and are not based on any custom or circumstance! So, this restriction was not just relevant during the period of miraculous gifts.

### **HEBREWS 10:23-25**

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Christians are urged to consider one another and how they might provoke one another to love and do good works for Jesus. Their assembling would play a key role in this. Notice there is a negative and positive command in verse 25 that complement each other in this. First, they were not to neglect (forsake, abandon) the assembling of the local church. So, they were to be regular in their attendance when the church assembled (even when there were threats of persecution). For, God has designed the things done in the assemblies as important to worshiping Him and the spiritual well-being of every Christian! Second, they were to actively encourage each other. Christians certainly accomplish this when they assemble on the first day of the week, both by their presence in the assemblies and their participation in the activities of the assemblies. Therefore, every Christian must prioritize the assemblies of the local church as a matter of necessity rather than something that is viewed as being optional or suggested!

### **CONCLUSION**

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God has designed it so that His people will be part of a local church that assembles at designated times. These assemblies are important to the worship and spiritual health of God's people. As with everything, the church needs to observe the pattern God has designed for these assemblies and not deviate from it (as many churches have done today)!

### **DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS**

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How is the responsibility to assemble different between the universal and local church?

What is the importance of the first day of the week?

Do Christians have the responsibility to keep the Sabbath?

What is the responsibility of the local church to meet at one place at one time?

What is the purpose of the church assemblies?

What limitation does God place on women in the assemblies of the church?

Why does God say these limitations exist?

Why is it important for Christians to attend the assemblies of the church?