

God's Church
— Part One —

The word translated “church” in our King James Bible, is used for Israel in the wilderness being led by Moses. *“This is he, that was in the **church** in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and [with] our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us”* (Acts 7:38).

The same word here translated “church” is also translated “assembly” in other places. For instance: *“Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the **assembly** was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together....But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful **assembly**. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the **assembly**”* (Acts 19:32-41).

None of the above passages of Scripture refer to the church (assembly) that Christ loved, *“and gave Himself for”* (Eph.5:25). For the purpose of this paper, I will use the word “assembly” when referring to the church. This English word would be a suited word for all of the above instances. What God is referring to by “assembly” is determined by the context in which it is found.

Churches (*assemblies*)

“Assemblies” are referred to nearly 40 times in the new Testament. When “assemblies”—the plural form of the word is used—it refers to various cities, or locations, such as *“the churches of Galatia,”* (1 Cor.16:1). *“And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches”* (Acts 15:41). *“The churches of Asia”* (1 Cor. 16:19).

This word is also found in the plural form to describe

assemblies made up of gentile believers, in many places: “*the churches of the Gentiles*” (Rom.16:4).

“Assembly” is also used in the plural form to mark the various types of meetings the assembly might have. That is, for prayer, to remember the Lord, or to have the Word of God read. “*For God is not [the author] of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches*”(1 Cor. 14:33-34). We note here it is *the assemblies of the saints*. Their responsibility for their conduct is the subject here.

See (Acts 2:42, Col.4:16, 1Cor.5:4-5, 1 Cor.11:18-22) for descriptions of various types of meetings for which the assembly came together. Such times were called “the assemblies of the saints.”

None of the plural uses of “assemblies” however, are meant to refer to assemblies having different doctrines, views, or other such distinctions. The Scriptures are not referring to different denominations of assemblies formed by different beliefs. The assemblies were separated by locations, not doctrine. “*For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church*” (1 Cor. 4:17). “*As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,*” (1 Tim.1:3).

The Unity of the Assembly

The assembly is referred to in its singular form nearly eighty times in the New Testament. It is this oneness, or unity which I now desire to consider, seeing its preciousness to God, and to Christ. We understand that it is Christ’s body, “*the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s*

sake, which is the church:” (Col. 1:24) “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph.5:23) “...the church. Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23).“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph. 5:30).

Every believer today that by faith has received, what Paul calls the gospel of your salvation, is a member of that one body of Christ. “In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13). “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor 12:27).

The assembly viewed as Christ’s body, is presently seen so as being here on earth united by the Holy Spirit to Christ the assembly’s Head in heaven. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also [is] (the) Christ” (1 Cor.12:12). “Christ is the head of the church” (Eph.5:23).

In light of these Scriptural truths, have believers no responsibility to display this oneness? The reason for this question is that there is one body. This fact remains true in spite of the failures of those who are members of His body. This body is not a unity formed by nor kept by men. Our responsibility comes from the relationship of being a member of the one body of Christ, for in Christianity responsibility flows from relationship. Indeed every relationship we have with God, and man carries with it responsibility. In Christianity responsibility flows from relationship rather than being the means of bringing us into relationships.

Our responsibility relating to the relationship of being members of the body of Christ here on earth is to “endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit”. “I therefore ... be-

seech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [There is] one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling...But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph.4:1-7).

“The vocation” (calling) we are to walk worthy of is found in Chapter 2. (Chapter 3 beginning with verse 2 is a parenthesis) A vital part of this calling is, “*And that he might reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby”* (Eph. 2:16).

The Unity of the Spirit

The unity of the Spirit involves the practical unity of the members of Christ’s one body on earth. Our walk down here is to be such that the outward visible unity of the one body can be plainly seen. There also are other considerations to the unity of the Spirit we are to endeavour to keep. But the practical display on earth of the truth of there being one body of Christ is an important one. Men do not see the one body that exists before God. However they do see the members that compose that body. Were each member of that one body, walking in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit according to God’s Word, the unity of the body would be seen by men. The unity of the Spirit is not the one body God sees. It would be the display that men could see now on earth that there is only one body. Sadly, this does not exist before men on earth. We have failed to keep this unity the Spirit of God would desire to bring us all into.

The risen Christ has given “gifts”, (men), for the purpose of helping the assembly to come into practical unity at this present time here on earth. Every believer has a

responsibly to seek this unity. (Remember the body of Christ is a reality on earth at this very moment, just as the reality of the Holy Spirit). Being unable to visibly see the body's oneness is a result of our failure, not God's. The body is not an invisible assembly, rather it is one assembly, one body, and is united by the Spirit to Christ its risen Head.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;... for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith,....But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,” (Eph. 4:11-16- Please read entire chapter).

The Loss of Practical Unity

By the Holy Spirit we have been joined together into one body. The apostle Paul admonishes us, *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by 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 perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Cor. 1:10).

“Now in this that I declare [unto you] I praise [you] not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it” (1 Cor.11:17-18).

Part two of our subject will seek to bring before our hearts, responsibilities, that flow from the privilege of being members of the body of Christ. Scripture doesn't speak of being a member of a church, but rather, it speaks of our being members of the one body. *“But now [are they] many members, yet but one body* (1 Cor. 12:20).

God's Church
—Part Two—

“Fitly Joined Together”

“From Whom (Christ the Head) the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16)

“Every joint” is that ministry of gift given by Christ the ascended Head, for the purpose of nourishing and knitting together practically the body of Christ. *“Holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19).*

“Every part” is a reference to each believer as a member of the body of Christ, which is His assembly. *“For our comely [parts] have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that [part] which lacked” (1 Cor. 12:24).* Every member of the body of Christ, the assembly, has a responsibility to this end, that is, a ministry to unite the body practically. *“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph. 4:7).*

Also, there are other spheres of unity the Spirit of God has brought us (Jew and Gentile believers) into. All are factors making up the vocation we are to walk worthy of. *“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father...fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone]. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord...In whom*

ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (vs. 18-22).

"Together" is spoken of some seven times in this epistle. "One" is mentioned some 6 times relating to our oneness to each other. This togetherness and oneness is a Divine reality, relative to every believer today. We have had, "one body", one "household of God", one "temple" "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Where do we see the reality of these unities?

How can we walk worthy of our vocation when there is such failure? The *unity of the Spirit* we are called upon to endeavour to keep (Eph.4:3) is the manifestation on earth of the truth of our vocation. Our vocation is that we are "one body". This is the unity the Spirit of God would bring us into were members of this one body subject to the *Spirit of Truth*. Man does not, cannot, make this unity. It is the result of the Holy Spirit being allowed to lead believers, into practical unity.

When we consider the truth of our Lord's Words. "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Mark 10:9) and the apostle Paul's word, "*This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church*" (Eph. 5). How solemn it is for anyone to act in such a way that they practically cause a separating of that which God has joined together.

It takes at least two to display unity. We might say then, 'what can I do as an individual to endeavour to keep this unity?' I do not believe this is difficult to answer. It is simply walking in such a way that no other member of the body of Christ would have a Scriptural reason for not walking with me in the same path.

What can you, and I as fellow members of that one body do to not hinder the fellowship (communion) of that

one body? “*The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we [being] many are one bread, [and] one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread*” (1 Cor.10:16-17.) God desires us to enjoy the precious communion or fellowship of this union.

A first step to this unity.

For this to be a reality we are admonished, to “*Quench not the Spirit*”, (1Thess 5:19) and to “*Grieve not the holy Spirit of God,*” (Eph.4:30)

Since our particular point of consideration is the truth that there is one body/one assembly, we must walk in such a way that does not exclude any member of that one body. Also our walk should not cause other members of the one body to have a concern as to me being a member of that one body. *Moral evil* in my life could cause this concern.

“*Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make [them] the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh*” (1 Cor. 6:15,16). My sin bears testimony that in reality I am one body with an harlot not the body of Christ.

Doctrinal evil has the same effect. “*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law...it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But...what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son...*” (Gal. 4: 19-30; Please see entire chapter). To hold false doctrine, that denies fundamental truth the assembly is to be the pillar and support of, is to call in



question the reality of my being a child of God. “I travail in birth again! “I stand in doubt of you”. This would cause my brethren to stand in doubt of me. In principle, I would be as one to be to be cast out, rather than one to be received into Christian fellowship. They would be forced to stand in doubt of me.

Other hindrances to fellowship

I must keep myself from doctrines, and practices, of fellowship which exclude other members of the body of Christ, who are not excluded, by moral or doctrinal evil.

1 Cor. 10 introduces us to the Lord’s table. It is the provision of God for all members of the body of Christ for the purpose of having fellowship (communion) together. The setting is the wilderness (or this world) here there are found, three classes of people. “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:” (32) The Jew had his altar, the Gentile had his idol, the church of God has the Lord’s table. Of the loaf on the table it says, “*The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*” (vs.16).

If I partake of a table expressing something other than being a member of the body of Christ, I do not have the fellowship of the Lord’s table. It is another fellowship I give expression to. If I say, “I am of this, or that denomination”, I exclude other members of the body who are not of my denomination. To identify myself as “a remnant testimony” is to acknowledge the body is torn in at least two, and others are not of the “remnant.” If I say, “I am of “Paul’s company” we must remember he rejected such identification with himself. (1 Cor. 3:4) Asia may have turned away from Paul, *he didn’t turn away from them.* There is no remnant in the church. One body, one house, one temple. No division is owned by God,

as being His assembly. He joins together.

A remnant according to grace and the thought of a *remnant* is in connection with the *Jewish believers*. They were a remnant of Israel put into the the Christian assembly as His city of refuge for them. Neither are the “*approved*” a remnant. They are simply believers who refuse sects as a principle of fellowship. “*For there must be also heresies (sects) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*” (1 Cor. 11:19).

The solution for our day.

“*Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph.4:1-3).

If these traits be found in us along with the desire to walk in truth, we shall be led into that unity with one another (“*the unity of the Spirit*”). “*Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or [whether] I speak of myself*” (Jn. 7:16-17).

If two are gathered together unto the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord promises His presence. Being thus gathered they are called *the assembly*. “*And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto the church: ... For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Matt.18:17-20). This is not a denomination, a remnant, or those of “Paul’s company”. They are simply “brethren”.

Actually in Matthew 18, the *offending brother* represents the Lord’s Jewish brethren. Their refusal to hear the church after it was formed was the final act that left them in relationship to the Lord and to His apostles as one of the

heathen (Gentiles). The Lord intimates this separation from His natural brethren (The Jews) in Matthew 12. *“Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother”* (vs. 47-50).

We might say the will of the Father was that Jesus should be confessed as *“The Christ, the Son of the living God”*. This confession is what the assembly is built upon. *“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matt.16:15-18).

In Mark’s gospel we learn that the Lord’s natural relatives had come to the Lord on this occasion (Mt. 12) because they considered the Lord to be *“beside Himself”*. *“And when his friends (relatives) heard [of it], they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.... There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him....And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!”* (Mk. 3:21-34).

Later in Matthew we read, *“Jesus saith unto them, Did*

ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” (Matt. 21:42-44). The Lord was a Stone of stumbling to His Jewish brethren, The Gentiles would be brought in.

In Matthew 13 the Lord begins to sow, He had not found fruit in Israel, and here begins a new work, amongst the nations. Israel was to be disowned as His people. *“Then said [God], Call his name Loammi: for ye [are] not my people, and I will not be your [God]”* (Hosea 1:9). This is Israel's present condition. When the church age is over, The Lord will once again go forth to sow, but then in will be in Israel. *“And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to [them which were] not my people, Thou [art] my people; and they shall say, [Thou art] my God”* (Hosea 2:23). For the present time, however, she is as one of the nations. (heathen)

In Luke, where Israel's rejection is looked at as final, they are preached to as being one of the nations.(Gentiles) See (Luke 24:47) See also (Rev.22:17) The Jew was to hear the church, or become as one of the nations, which is what they are now in God's governmental ways. The assembly has a message of forgiveness of sins if refused it is the retaining of sins. (John 20:23) Israel as a nation did not hear the assembly. Those Jews that did, are at present a remnant of Israel according to grace. (Rom. 11:1-5) But they are not aremnant of the assembly.

This “gathering together” unto the Lord's Name is the Spirit's Work. It is a provision still available for those seeking to walk worthy of the vocation wherein they are

called. *All believers are brethren.* Mathew 18 is speaking of those *who were Jewish brethren.* The believing Jews were added to the church, then scattered from Jerusalem. “*The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved...As for Saul, he made havock of the church... Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word*” (Acts 2:47; 8:1). While Matthew 18 has a peculiar bearing on the Jewish believers, it is the *same assembly* as Paul gives us, though in Matthew 18 it is a different aspect of the assembly. Still, however, it is available for those who are brethren in Christ. *All Christians.*

May we each earnestly seek to be gathered together in assembly unto our Lord’s precious Name. Owning in truth there is one body. Any other basis of unity, is not the unity of the Spirit. The Lord promises His presence collectively, to such a company, even if only two are so gathered together unto His precious Name *(Matt. 18:20). Let us not forfeit this privilege by not endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit.

* In Matthew 18 the assembly is God’s provision for the believing Jew to be added to, in order to escape the judgment that was to come upon Jerusalem for their rejection of Christ “But when the king heard [thereof], he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city” (Mt. 22:7) These believing Jews were “such as should be saved” or “were to be”, (Saved from the coming judgment of Titus.) (Acts 2:47) The assembly still has this character for any of Israel’s race that will hear the gospel Paul declares to be “the gospel of your salvation. (Eph. 1:13)

They, with us, become “one new man” and “one body” (Eph. 2:15-16) Israel, in unbelief has meanwhile been delivered to tormentors. (Mt. 18:34) Titus was one of them. The believing Jews, though scattered from Jerusalem, would have Christ in their midst, where



they gathered together collectively unto His Name. It was called “the church”. This privilege remains today for all believers.

The Jews refused to be so gathered and now are in a desolated house. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [thou] that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under [her] wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” (Mt. 23:37-38).



God's Church
—Part Three—

Responsibility

“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required...” (Luke 12:46).

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by (through) the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph.3:10).

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present [you as] a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor.11:2).

Believers today have been brought into the closest relationship with God that any creature of God has ever been placed. As members of Christ's body here on earth we display to principalities and powers in heavenly places the *“all various wisdom of God.”* Also we as members of His body, are espoused to Christ. There are very great responsibilities relating to and flowing from these privileges.

We have been considering the responsibility of each member of the body of Christ to *“Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit”*. Now I desire to look into some responsibilities the assembly of God, has in being a manifestation on earth of this unity of the Spirit. We will also consider some responsibilities an individual believer has in being identified with such an assembly of God on earth.

Assembly Responsibilities: Subjection

“The church is subject (or, subjected) unto Christ” (Eph.5:24) This, we might say, is the great all encompassing responsibility of the assembly. From the beginning of fallen man's history he has desired to exalt himself to be as God. The result has been man's shame. We might do

well to note that at the pinnacle of this desire he set about to make a name for himself. “*And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top [may reach] unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth*” (Gen.11:4). The city he set about to build would manifest his wisdom, the tower, his glory and exaltation above all. All ended in God’s judgment and scattering of them..

Christ’s assembly is also seen as a city; one that displays God’s wisdom, and God’s glory. “*Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that *great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God...*” (Rev. 21:9-10). God’s wisdom and glory seen in the assembly resulted in the gathering together of men. Together is the thought conveyed by the word assembly. "It is “called out”, but for the purpose of being brought “together.” Consequently we read, “*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Matt.18:20).

“*In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor. 5:4).

“*In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*” (Eph. 2:22).

“*From whom (Christ the Head) the whole body fitly joined together and compacted...*” (Eph.4:16).

The Result of Subjection: Togetherness

This togetherness of the assembly would have been the natural result of the assembly being subject to Christ its Head. God has subjected the assembly to Christ its Head,

* *The word “Great” could be omitted in this verse.*

but sadly the assembly has not been subject to Him.

From its beginning, men have sought to bring the assembly into subjection to themselves, wresting Scriptures to their own destruction. *“they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction”* (2 Pet. 3:16)

When first mentioned, as a functioning assembly these words are recorded. *“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen (Gentile) man and a publican”* (Matt.18:17). Men were to hear the assembly. Failure to hear it leads a believer into the sphere of being *as a heathen* (Gentile). He sets personal judgment of himself above that of the assembly. This judgment is not assembly discipline but that of making a judgment between two brethren in the matter of offenses.

“But Jesus called them [unto him], and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you” (Matt.20:25,26).

In self exaltation, men are now usurping the headship of Christ, seeking to bring the assembly into subjection to themselves. *“as being lords over [God’s] heritage,”* (1 Pet.5:3) rather than *“being ensamples to the flock.”*

With many this no doubt is because of misunderstanding the meaning of certain Scriptures. Presently there is failure to see that the assembly has no one to whom God has given any official authority (such as the Apostles, or elders as appointed by the apostles).

At the present time only the assembly has been given official authority to administrate the assembly’s affairs on earth. It does this under the Headship of Christ—that is it acts in His Name. The assembly’s authority, as with all

official authority, is derived from God. Assembly actions are to be taken in submission to Christ its Head, unto Whose Name it is gathered together.

Hearing Christ

The assembly is solemnly responsible to remain in complete subjection to Christ its Head. Those composing the assembly are responsible to hear the assembly. The assembly is to hear Christ, through the Word of God. *“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from him which is...And from Jesus Christ”* (Rev.1:4,5)

Each *local expression* of the assembly is responsible to hear and act in obedience to God’s Word. If the assembly refuses to hear it may well be removed from that place of being a candlestick or might come under Christ’s judgment. The assembly is not infallible. Nor is it exempt from Christ’s judgment. It occupies a place of privilege and responsibility.

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write...Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev.2:1-5).

“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God... I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works” (Rev.2:18-21)

“For this cause many [are] weak and sickly among

you, and many sleep” (1Cor.11:30). Corinth’s divided and carnal condition resulted in God’s government having to move in these very adverse ways.

Individual Responsibility

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev. 2:7,11,17,29, 3:6,13,22)

What is written to all seven assemblies is to be heard by every believer. Not only are we to hear the assembly, in its judgments relating to our conduct, but we also are to hear what is written to the assemblies. *“He that overcomes”* is mentioned seven times in this passage and it is *singular*. No matter what conditions the assembly may degenerate to, each believer is responsible to hear and overcome.

It is well also to notice that the overcomer overcomes in the assembly. He does not leave the assembly as long as God addresses it as “the church”. In Rev. 2 and 3 all seven churches are still called “the church”. Our Lord has great patience with His assembly, giving her space to repent. We often fail in patience. Many have left what God still owns as His assembly. If God formed it by the Spirit it is His assembly until He declares otherwise. If men form “a church” or “our church” it is not God’s assembly it is man’s. The assembly as seen in Matthew 18 is formed by the Spirit of God by gathering together two or three unto Christ’s Name and thus it is called “the church”.

The Assembly In Other Aspects

As the *temple* (1 Cor.3), the *house* (1 Tim.3:5-15), as well as what is called a *great house* (2 Tim.2:20). Men have various roles in its building, its care, and sad to say, in its corruption. Still we do not leave any aspect of the assembly as long as God still owns it as His. Jewish Chris-



tians were called upon to leave Judaism, when God no longer owned it as His. A professing Christian Jew who remained or went back to “the camp” (as Judaism is now called), was to become an apostate. “*Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach*” (Heb.13:13).

“*For [it is] impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put [him] to an open shame*” (Heb. 6:4-6).

Christians cannot leave the sphere of Christendom until God disowns it as His light bearer. We are in it until the rapture after which it will become apostate, no longer owned by God as belonging to Him. We should not say “Christendom around us” as though we are not in it and a part of it. We do not leave this house of *Christian profession* until the Lord does.

The assemblies as viewed in Revelation 2 and 3 could be, and were, removed. Matthew 18 also gives us an *aspect* of the assembly that might cease to exist, because it is dependent upon two or three being gathered together unto Christ’s Name. The Holy Spirit still gathers Christians together unto our Lord’s Name.

When there is a desire and willingness on our part to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace, I believe He will still grant that privilege to even two or three who respond. All is grace.

Lukewarmness seems to be indifference to Christ’s claims as found in His Word. “*So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire,*



that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Rev. 3:16-18).

Let us take seriously our responsibilities relating to the *assembly of God* for we surely have been given much. “*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more*” (Luke 12:48).

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