

Must We Meet Others for Worship?

How important is gathering regularly on Sabbaths?

When Yahweh offered His Covenant with Israel in Exodus 24:1-7, He promised them certain blessings and protection. Israel readily agreed to this covenant. Exodus 25 onward reveals Israel's responsibilities. They were to offer some of their "spoils" taken from the Egyptians so that a sanctuary might be constructed for Yahweh to dwell in and be among the people. Yahweh asked only for a portion of that which He had given them.

Precise instructions were given for building both the Tabernacle and the furniture, along with the required instruments to be used in a specific way in His worship. Similarly, Yahweh has given us guidelines that reveal how He wants to be worshiped today.

The Book of Leviticus deals with specific instructions for mankind in our worship of Yahweh. Chapter 23 gives us the seven Annual Holy Days and the weekly Saturday Sabbath, which are to be observed forever, we find. All Israel was to gather in holy convocation at these special times.

We Do Not Worship at Jerusalem

With the destruction of the Temple and the razing of Jerusalem in the year 70 C.E, worship could no longer continue in Jerusalem. Yahshua had alluded to this with the woman at the well in John 4:21 and 23, where He said,

"Woman, believe me, the hour comes, when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. The hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such does the Father seek to be His worshipers," ASV.

But does the destruction of the Temple mean we no longer are to gather as a body for worship? Are New Testament believers exempt from congregating in observing His special days? Are we to worship by ourselves now that the Holy Spirit has come to earth, and not join with others when possible?

If Yahweh expected ancient Israel to meet in worship on His Sabbaths, does He not expect us to join with others as well? Of course. He has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us, as well as His Word that defines and illustrates exactly how we must worship today as anciently.

Example of the Disciples

The disciples had obediently stayed on at Jerusalem even after the ascension of the Messiah to heaven in 31 C.E. They were observing the Feast of Weeks as a body when the outpouring of the Spirit took place. Had they not observed the day of Pentecost, they would not have been present at Jerusalem and would therefore have missed receiving the Holy Spirit.

Yahshua had promised that the Holy Spirit would come to this earth to remain forever, John 14:16 and 26. Paul further explained that because Yahshua had ascended to the Father, He now gave special spiritual gifts unto mankind, Ephesians 4:8-13.

Note the special positions given within the Assembly: *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers"* (Eph. 4:11). The position of apostle has ceased, for an apostle by definition had to have seen the risen Messiah and performed miracles (Acts 1:22, 1Cor. 15:7-8, 2Cor. 12:12).

Through these special teachers a deeper instruction is provided for the true believer, and is *"for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of*

Messiah: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of Yahweh, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah" (Eph. 4:12-13).

Holy Spirit Given at Baptism

Acts 2:38 states the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to the believer when we are baptized into Yahshua's saving Name. Note the words of Peter: "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

We understand that Yahshua's Spirit like an invisible shield is around those He has called to be a part of the Body of Messiah. Upon baptism, the Holy Spirit is placed within the individual. Yahweh's indwelling Spirit allows us to bear fruit (Gal. 5:22). The fruits are the result of the Holy Spirit's working in our individual lives through the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness motivated by Yahweh's Holy Spirit.

But clearly, in addition to bringing forth fruits of the Spirit, each baptized believer is also given, individually, special spiritual gifts to be used to edify and build up the Assembly. These gifts are the shepherding influences given to members of the body of Messiah to guide and strengthen the Ekklesia (often erroneously called the "church.")

Melchizedek Priesthood

Although there is no officiating Levitical priesthood today, Yahweh has made provision to provide leadership for the Assembly or body of Messiah. We have the advantage over ancient Israel in each having our own copy of the Bible that we can carry with us. To help in gaining a deeper understanding of His word, Yahweh has given certain ones the responsibility of teaching truth and to emphasize necessary doctrines to build up the Body of Messiah.

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Yahweh, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. [And] be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thes. 5:12-13).

Paul points out there will be elders charged with the responsibility of the assembly: "*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17).* The word "rule" in the Greek is **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance** (SEC) No. 4291 *proistemi*, meaning to stand before in rank, to preside, and is translated preside, gift of leadership, do their duties well.

The writer of Hebrews uses a different word in reminding us that there are those whose gift is to lead the assembly. Note the following: "*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of [their] conversation.*" (Heb. 13:7)

Again in Hebrews 13:17 we read, "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.*"

Now read Hebrews 13:24: "*Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.*"

Here the word *rule* is SEC 2233, *hegeomai*, to lead, i.e. to command with official authority, from *ago*, a prime verb meaning to lead.

Yahweh's Spirit inspires and motivates the body of believers to cooperate and become a viable force in the world in proclaiming His truth. All things of Yahweh are to be done decently and in

order, 1Corinthians 14:40, and the Elders are to preside over the meetings to keep order and provide proper decorum for Yahweh's worship.

Baptism by the Ordained

The true body of believers will not be large group, but rather a "little flock," Luke 12:32. Revelation 12:17 refers to "the remnant of her seed," still carrying on under the adverse conditions of Satan's wrath. Resolved to follow in the Savior's footsteps, the true believer becomes a seasoned veteran in a short time.

The Book of Acts is the history of the early Assembly. We read that the disciples, now called Apostles (the word means "those sent with a mission") baptized those who were converted Acts 2:38-41. When someone was baptized, it was done by those ordained to the leadership of Yahweh's assembly, and the laying on of hands was done by the elders, Acts 8:16-17, 19:6. The gifts of the Spirit were passed on through the presbytery, 1Tim. 4:14.

Benefits of Fellowship

These new converts of Yahshua did not go their separate ways. Verse 42 reveals they "*continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers,*" ASV.

There are those who might think that fellowship is unimportant. They may contend that they can worship at home or by themselves and make no effort to join in worship with fellow believers.

It was customary for ancient Israel to gather on the weekly Sabbaths as well as assemble for the seven annual Sabbaths.

Sometimes it happens that those who may be quite sincere go their separate ways, Sadly, once away from the stabilizing influence of the organized body they soon end up with strange, unbiblical, twisted doctrines.

Fellowship with other sincere Bible students will often dispel false notions before they can take root. Close association with brethren who continue to study their Bible and apply the lessons learned can be an enormous help in our growth as we study and search for pure doctrine. Assembling on Yahweh's Sabbaths allows us to encourage and strengthen the faith of others.

Paul said that it was through fellowship that we are perfected. He reviews the gifts of the Spirit given to the Assembly in 1Corinthians 12:7-11, "*And to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the benefit of all. For to one is given through the Spirit, a Word of wisdom; and to another a word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; and to another Faith by the same Spirit; and to another Gifts of cures by the same Spirit, and to another operations of Mighty works; and to another Prophecy; and to another, Discrimination of Spirits; and to another Different languages and to another, Interpretations of languages. But all these things performs the one and same Spirit, distributing to each in particular as it will.*"

Different Spiritual Gifts

Paul points out in 1Corinthians 12 that the body of Messiah is made up of diversities of workings of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle compares the Assembly (Yahshua's Body) to the human body, showing that each member has an important part to play. Note his comments:

"Now you are the body of Messiah, and members in particular. And Yahweh has set some in the assembly, first Apostles, secondly Prophets, thirdly Teachers, then Miracles, then Gifts of healings, Helps, Governments, divers kinds of Tongues" (1Cor. 12:27-28).

The body of Messiah is composed of those who are called to learn deeper truth and become the living "Body" of the Messiah. Yahweh places within the body those He feels will best guide and edify His Assembly. Yahweh places members in the Assembly as it has pleased Him, 1Corinthians 12:18.

Neglect Not to Assemble

Fellowship and sharing with those deeply committed to the Messiah is uplifting and inspiring. We all need to take time away from our worldly pursuits and spend time with others with whom we share the goal to be in that first resurrection. This helps keep our activities and purpose in proper perspective.

We are told, *"Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, and so much more as you see the day approaching,"* Heb. 10:25.

A neglected truth is found in 1Corinthians 5:4-5 concerning a man caught up in a great sin. Paul says the Assembly should gather and handle the sin. He has already judged what should be done with this man, verse 3. Then he goes on to say, *"When you are gathered together in the name of our Master Yahshua Messiah, and my spirit, with the power of our Master Yahshua..."* verse 4.

Paul urges the Corinthians to gather in Yahshua's Name to handle the situation. Though Paul is with them in spirit, he implies that a greater Power is present when the Ekklesia gathers in regular assembly. The Savior Himself stated that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He would be among them, Matthew 18:20. Paul implies that the entire Assembly would have even greater power when in convocation.

Guides and Helps

While Yahshua is not here physically, He did not leave His body of believers without guidance. There are no Levitical priests functioning today, but there are those appointed of Yahweh to guide and direct the Body.

Gathering together is not only to learn of Yahweh and His law. It is clear from New Testament teachings and examples that we are expected to fellowship with those of like faith.

We are to grow in grace and knowledge and we are expected to function as a part of the body of Messiah. This is best done through regular attendance as often as possible with those of like faith. At the same time we can exercise among the brethren the gifts of the Spirit that we have been given.

In fact, by implication most of the gifts and especially the offices given to True Worshipers can ONLY be fully exercised through regular and consistent interaction in an organized body of True Worshipers who are striving to live according to the Word.

The Least of His Brethren

Our relationships with the brethren are likened to our relationship to the Savior Himself, Matthew 25:40. One of the most difficult tasks for many is to show love toward all those who have been called into the Assembly. We at times have difficulty loving the unlovely. We must accept the fact that not all in the Ekklesia will be easy to love. We as living stones are being prepared for the habitation of Yahweh through His Spirit. The shaping, chiseling, and fitting of each believer is carried out as we learn to respect His higher wisdom in selecting those to become a fit temple for Him.

"You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Yahweh by Yahshua the Messiah," 1Peter 2:5.

Our duty is to join with those who are also striving to walk the narrow way with other brethren, even if we in our infinite wisdom may not have chosen them. Because Yahshua has chosen all who are in the Body, we likely can grow and mature more rapidly in Him because of His choice. *"And the Master added to the Assembly daily such as should be saved."* (Acts 2:47)

For Those in Remote Areas

Because those revering Yahweh's word and calling upon His Name are widely scattered, it is not always possible to meet as frequently as desirable. If this is the case with you, then you may find YAIY's outreach media a big help. Through these video DVD's of weekly Sabbath services you can join in singing songs of praise while learning from and being edified by sound, Biblical sermons—no matter where you may be. Write us!

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