

"Go To Church"

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I keep two of my FM radio selection buttons in my car tuned to two different Christian radio stations. Therefore, I listen to a lot of preaching from both Evangelists and Pastors. With regularity, they both consistently admonish us to "not forsake assembling ourselves together." Of course, this is the famous verse in the Book of **Hebrews 10:25** with which contemporary preachers, and pastors continually beat us over the head to get us to go to a building styled "The First Baptist Church," The "Unity Church," The First Assembly of God Church," "Saint Paul's Methodist Church," the "Holy Name Catholic Church," the Trinity Lutheran Church", and the "Church of the Latter Day Saints," etc.

They herd us in there, of course, to help retire the mortgage on all of those ornate, plush, and seldom used buildings.

This one simple verse in Hebrews (the only one with reference to the assembly of Christians) has been used to build by far the largest business in our country. **The Corporate Church!** No company or corporation has such an intricate, complex, costly, or bureaucratic home office as does the national offices of most of our denominations. Certainly none of our major companies has as many local outlets as do our "Churches".

I have just finished listening to one of these preachers, and he stated "the devil works overtime to keep us from going to church." You see, the verb go, and the preposition to indicate that in order to worship the Lord we have to take our physical bodies to a specific location in order to do so. Why, I've even seen billboards proclaim, "Seek the Lord, You'll Find Him in Church."

The establishment is touting the establishment. Where in the Bible does it say, "to find the Lord in church?" I can tell you! Nowhere! It is my sincere belief that in a good many of these so-called "church buildings" would be the last place one would find the Lord.

Let us analyze this tiny verse from which sprang through the centuries gargantuan buildings with spires reaching high into the skies, with facades masterfully chiseled, leaded, stained glass windows, organs with pipes reaching high up to the ceiling, and covering the width of the entire buildings, baby grand pianos, crimson plush carpeted, balconies, lodges, elevators, multi-story parking garages, vast paved parking lots, rolling landscaped campuses.

"Do not forsake assembling yourselves" by no means even implies that we must do it as a building labeled "church building." In fact the opposite is actually taught in the scripture located in **Matt 18:20** which states that where "two or more are gathered together in my name...there shall I be also." Now this is very easy for me to understand, and I trust that it will be for you also. "Two or more," does not mean 2,000, 5,000, or 10,000, which are figures that present day churches like to bandy about. The first century church took this scripture literally and they met in each other's homes. They also met in public buildings such as the Roman Basilicas (courthouse). Occasionally, they would rent a building for a larger get together. One is desperate to find any so-called "church building" owned by the members in the first several centuries of the history of the Christian Church.

Nor does this Hebrew's verse how often to meet, or instruct us what to we should do when we get there. The last Baptist Church to which I belonged (and I guess they still have my "letter") was going to launch a program to build a new auditorium. The cost would come to some million and a half dollars. I went to them with a simple proposition. Why not start a worship service on Saturday, the same as the one on Sunday? This would divide the congregation, because many of them would obviously like to have two days off when Monday's are holidays, and by dividing our congregation in half...the need for the auditorium would cease to exist.

To support my proposition I pointed that the book of James in the New Testament stated, **"pure religion was taking care of widows, and orphans, etc."** I pointed out that we could take this million and a half dollars, and place it in the Benevolent Fund in the church budget. (This was where the only money to be used for this purpose was to be found in the budget and it was only approximately \$1.000 at this time.) Also, I stated that even though there may be scriptural reason for departing the Lord's Sabbath as our day of worship, that it certainly must be as good a day as Wednesday night, etc; and if not, then we should cease all worship days except Sunday.

Folks, do I need to tell you that this plan went over like the proverbial "lead balloon?" For a while there, I thought that I might be crucified. Also, needless to say, the new auditorium is completed and certainly anyone would say that it is a much more comfortable place in which to worship the Lord.

As mentioned earlier, this verse in Hebrews does not instruct us what to do when we get "to church." Remember, if, when we scrutinize our "order of worship" if anything contained therein cannot be found in the New Testament then it is obviously man's doings. The program itself which contains the "order of worship" cannot be found there. This is man's doing. When you are in the world and attend a prizefight at the coliseum a program is handed you as you enter the gate. When you attend the theatre, you likewise receive one. How about a concert, circus, track meet, football game, etc.? But, you say, just because they do it doesn't make it wrong! The Bible plainly instructs us to separate ourselves from the world. How can you be separate when you copy it? Also, it is not just the program itself, but what the program contains.

Does it say, "the flowers adorning the lectern today are the gift of Mr. & Mrs. J. Jones...in memory of their daughter?" If so, this is wrong. Ask yourself this question. "Is God omnipotent?"...Does He know all, and see all...past, present, and future?" If so, then you must know that He knows Mr. and Mrs. Jones heart, and their love for their departed daughter. Right? Then ask this question, "why then, is it in the program?" The answer is simple...and there is no other...**it is for the benefit of the people who attend and read the program.** The Bible admonishes us to **"not seek the plaudits of our fellow men,"** and also that if we "seek our reward here on earth...then we already have it...there will be none in heaven."

If you wanted to single out one great teaching of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, it would be this **"do not follow the commandments of men."** You see, a simple abridgement of this teaching such as the flowers, gradually over the centuries, leads to brass donor plates on pews, "Door Knocker" awards for the most visitations, lists of building fund contributors, a score board on the wall to keep you informed as the number of members who are in attendance today, last week, amount of contributions, etc. You can go on and on with this sort of thing. But the point is made, and that is that all of these things are adopted by man and for man's benefit...not God's and they are wrong.

Have you ever asked yourself the question, "why a certain person, or persons are called on to pray at these assemblies?" Where is the scripture that states that we should be led in prayer by one person when we are assembled? I can answer that for you...There are none. If not, then the custom is man made, and if it is man made then you can bet that it has become prostituted like so many other ordinances, etc.

Could it be that the person asked is an important Deacon, or visiting brother Pastor, or one "who prays well", or even someone who the preacher wants to make feel important in hope that he will join the church, take an assignment, etc.