

ISSUE

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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

October 14,
2018

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Ryan Matney
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Kevin Wise
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



When Are We “In the Church”?

By Kyle Pope

In our previous study we submitted the argument that Paul’s words **“as the law also says”** in 1 Corinthians 14:34 may be best explained by the fact that the Old Testament nowhere records women speaking before the special representative assembly of Israel known in the Hebrew as the *qahal* and in the Greek as the *ekklēsia* (or “church”). If this explains Paul’s appeal to the Law it leads to some considerations which relate to our understanding of what it means to be **“in the church.”**

“They Shall All Know Me”

If this explanation is correct it is clear that there are some differences between the Lord’s church and the sense in which *ekklēsia* (or *qahal*) was applied in the Old Testament. First, as we noted in our previous study not all Israelites were allowed to be a part of the *qahal* (or *ekklēsia*). While a variety of people were allowed to dwell among the Israelites many were excluded from “entering” the *qahal* (or *ekklēsia*) these included the emasculated (Deut. 23:1), those of illegitimate birth (Deut. 23:2), and certain generations of Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and Egyptians (Deut. 23:3-8). In a similar way Leviticus 4:13 begins an explanation of the procedure for sin offering, **“if the whole congregation (*‘edah*) of Israel sins**

unintentionally, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly (*qahal* or *ekklēsia*)..." In this it is clear that one could be an Israelite, but not part of the *qahal*. In fact being an Israelite meant that one was subject to the terms of the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 29:10-19) but not necessarily that one **"knew the Lord"** (Judges 2:10; 1 Sam. 2:12; 3:7). This makes the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34 regarding the New Covenant especially striking. The Lord promised that under the New Covenant, **"No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his broth-**

er, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them..." (Jer 31:34, NKJV). While all men are obligated to obey the New Covenant, that does not mean that all people are **"in the church."** However, by its very definition all who are in Christ **"know the Lord."** In Christ there is no representative assembly (*qahal* or *ekklēsia*) that exists separate from some members of the church—**"from the least of them to the greatest"** one who is in Christ is *in Christ's ekklēsia* (or "church").

"When You Come Together in the Church"

When one is obedient to the gospel the Lord adds him or her to the church (Acts 2:47 KJV, NKJV). Because of this **"all the saints"** in a local congregation (Phil. 1:1) are considered the **"church"** in that place (cf. Phil. 4:15). Yet, it is clear that while one can be *in the church* as a member of the Lord's church (universally or locally) that does not mean that he or she is always assembled **"in the church."** This is clear in several passages. Jesus commanded in Matthew 18:17 after two or three call a sinner to repentance **"if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."** Obviously we can only *tell* the "church" something when the church is assembled. Paul instructed that his epistle to the Colossians was to be read **"in the church of the Laodiceans"** (Col 4:16). Paul rebuked the Corinthians for having divisions among them **"when you come together as a [lit. "in the"] church"** (1 Cor. 11:18). The one who could speak in tongues was to be silent **"in church"** if there was no interpreter (1 Cor. 14:28). Paul claimed that he spoke with tongues more than any of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:18), but



said that **“in the church”** he would rather speak **“five words with the understanding”** (1 Cor. 14:19). Finally, in the text under consideration, Paul commanded women to be **“silent in the churches”** (1 Cor. 14:34) since **“it is shameful for a woman to speak in church”** (1 Cor. 14:35). Obviously to be *in the church* in this sense is to be in an actual assembly of the church.

When is the Church Assembled “in the Church?”

One of the issues we struggle with is how to determine when members of a local congregation are actually **“in the church.”** Many brethren will say it is when we assemble **“for worship.”** Certainly the context of 1 Corinthians 14 addresses elements of worship, but Paul doesn’t say **“it is shameful for a woman to speak in worship.”** In Jesus’ command regarding church discipline, *telling* the church about a member’s conduct is not *worship* but it involves an assembly of the **“church.”** Others would suggest that any time the entire membership of a local congregation is in the same place they are **“in the church.”** This cannot be upheld with consistency. A congregation of two families might work together, shop together, camp together, or even go to the movies together. Yet, none of these things are works of the church. Are these saints working, shopping, camping, and going to the theater *as a church*? Obviously not. How then is a gathering **“in the church”** distinguished from one that is not?

We may gain some insight on this question by looking back at what we learned about distinctions of assemblies in the Old Testament. As we noted above, unlike the Old Covenant, all in Christ are in the church (or

ekklēsia). However, the Old Testament demonstrated the principle that the same people at one time could be part of the (*edah*) the general assembly of all Israel, and at other times the representative assembly (*qahal* or *ekklēsia*). *How were these assemblies differentiated?* Numbers 10:1-7 outlined the procedure by which two silver trumpets were to be used to call the Israelites to meet or advance for various purposes. When both trumpets were blown, **“all the congregation (*edah*) shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting”** (10:3). However, there was a distinct call that summoned the *qahal*. Numbers 10:7 declares, **“When convening the assembly (*qahal*), however, you shall blow without sounding an alarm”** (NASB). So the same people could assemble for distinct purposes under which different rules would apply.



The New Testament does not teach a method like the sounding of a trumpet to distinguish a less formal assembly from saints coming together **“in the church,”** but some type of distinction is inferred. In Scripture the issue is not whether all members of a church are together in one place. In Troas, a congregation that met in a private home assembled at one point **“as**

a church” (Acts 20:7-10) and later, the same people, in the same place ate a common meal together. Even so it was not that they ate **“as a church”** (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-34). If a congregation builds a building, that building should only be used for works of the church, but not all works of the church require being assembled **“in the church.”**

A Bible class or private study does not have to involve an assembly of the church. *So, how should we differentiate such assemblies?* By using **“Bible names in Bible ways.”** If we state clearly when we are assembled **“in the church,”** we use the wording of Scripture and make it clear to visitors and members when the rules of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 apply and when they do not.



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Please come again.**

● **Let us know if you have any questions.**