

THE ASSEMBLY

Psalms 111:1

Smith Bibens

“Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation”

Introduction: In the first century, as now, there was a problem in the church. Some of the members were neglecting the worship of God, and the spiritual profit that comes from assembling with the saints for worship. The need for dealing with this violation of God’s will is as great today as nineteen centuries ago.

The following objections have been set forth by some against faithful attendance at worship:

- “I can just as well worship God by the brook or in the forest as in a church building.”

- "I don't see what going to church has to do with one's relationship with the Lord. Why, you can be a gardener without belonging to a garden club, so why can't you be a Christian without going to church?"
- "People who go to church aren't any better than me - some of them are nothing but hypocrites!"
- "I have a job that keeps me from being at every Lord's Day service. What of it? I go whenever I can, and doesn't Paul say 'If any provide not for his own...he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel' - 1 Timothy 5:8."

Some attend faithfully and some do not, Has God left man to make his own choice in the matter? Does God care if we attend the service of the church, in particular, the Lord's Day service? These are vital questions. The only way to settle the matter is to turn to God's Word, which is able to "...thoroughly furnish unto all good works" - 2 Timothy 3:17.

The Old Testament Background

- A. *Solemn Assemblies or "convocations"*
1. "to convoke," to call together, summon to meet" (Random House College Dictionary)
 2. "convocation," "a solemn festival gathering of the congregation of Israel; a holy assembly during which no servile work was done, but burnt offerings were to be presented" (Baker's Bible Encyclopedia). The "holy convocations" were scheduled as follows:
 - a. Sabbaths, Leviticus 23:1-3
 - b. The Passover
 - c. The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15th Nisan)
 - d. The first and eighth days of the Feast of Tabernacles
 - e. The first and tenth days of the month of Nishri, including the Day of Atonement. (Baker's Bible Encyclopedia)
- B. *Observance of these appointments of God was obligatory.*
1. Numbers 15:32-36
 2. Deuteronomy 16:16
- C. *It was from these regular meetings, appointment by God, that the "synagogue" arose during and after the Babylonian*

Captivity (Baker's Bible Encyclopedia). The word "synagogue" means "congregation."

- D. *It was the Lord's custom to attend the synagogue during His earthly sojourn - Luke 4:16.*
- E. *It is clear from the book of Acts that the earliest churches grew out of the Jewish synagogue.*

Precept and Principle - The Bible teaches by both precept and principle.

- A. "Precept," a commandment or direction meant as a rule of conduct or action" (Random House College Dictionary)
- B. "Principle," as used here is "a fundamental truth, law, doctrine, or motivating force, upon which others are based" (Random House College Dictionary).
- C. The precepts are the direct commands, rules, regulations, codes, and requirements of Scripture. The principles are the underlying truths that are the basis and reason for the precepts. A principle is a standard of truth that may be applied to more than one situation. Principles help explain the "why" behind the precepts (Josh McDowall, Right from Wrong {Dallas: Word, 1994}).

The Precepts

- A. *Worship God - "They that worship him in spirit and in truth"*
 - 1. Matthew 4:10
 - 2. John 4:23-24
 - 3. Philippians 3:3
- B. *Assemble - "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together"*
 - 1. Hebrews 10:25
 - 2. 1 Corinthians 11:17-18, 22
 - 3. Teaching, singing, and prayer are offered when "the whole church be come together in one place."
 - a. 1 Corinthians 14:23-24, 31 (Cf. 1 Corinthians 14)
 - b. 1 Corinthians 14:15
- C. *The Lord's Supper - "This do in remembrance of me"*
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 - Cf. Matthew 26:26-29
 - 2. Acts 20:7
- D. *Giving - "Let every one of you lay by him in store"*

