
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Is church attendance essential?**

This is an important subject to consider because the popular idea today is that church attendance is nice, but not essential. To many people church attendance has degenerated to something they do only when they feel like they need it. No thought or consideration is given to whether God wants them to assemble and worship Him, but everything hinges upon whether they themselves feel they need it.

What then does the Bible teach in regards to church attendance?

OLD TESTAMENT REGULATIONS

Let us begin by examining the Old Testament regulations, but let me preface my remarks with this: According to Colossians 2:14 we do not live under the Old Testament laws today ... those laws were done away when Jesus died on the cross. But we do learn some lessons from the Old Testament:

Romans 15:4

4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Let us, then, examine the Old Testament regulations regarding worship and learn some lessons.

FIRST: Attendance at public worship was essential.

In fact, if one failed to attend the public calls for worship it was a capital offence in God's eyes and the one neglecting worship was to be executed:

Numbers 9:9-13

9 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

10 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the LORD's Passover.

11 On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

12 They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.

13 But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the LORD at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.

This passage clearly demonstrates that attendance to the Passover assembly was mandatory. "They shall keep it," God said and if they do not, "The same soul shall be cut off from among his people!" That is, this person would be executed.

SECOND: The people were not allowed to worship God in just any place they chose for themselves.

Deuteronomy 12:13-14

13 Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see;

14 but in the place which the LORD chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.

No one back in those days went around saying, "It doesn't matter where you worship. One place is as good as another. Just attend the church of your choice."

No ... these people were taught that they could not assemble and worship in a place of their own choosing, but they must assemble and worship where God designated.

NEW TESTAMENT REGULATIONS

Now ... from the Old Testament we have learned that the Jews in the olden days could not neglect the worship assemblies of God, and neither could they worship in just any place of their own choosing; they must assemble and worship in the place where God chose.

The New Testament, which is our guide for today, has similar instructions for us. We are taught:

FIRST: Attendance at the worship assembly of the church is essential.

Hebrews 10:25

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Make note of two words here: (1) assembling and (2) together. Worship requires an assembling together. There are times when we can praise God and pray to God in the privacy of our own homes, but there is also a time that we are to assemble together with the church of God for public worship. Hebrews 10:25 teaches us that it is wrong to forsake the assembly of the Lord's church.

SECOND: We may not worship in just any place of our own choosing.

The popular idea today is, "Attend the church of your choice." But what ever happened to the church of God's choice? Where does the Bible ever instruct Christians to worship just any old place and just any old way that they themselves choose? The point is, God has instructed us exactly how to conduct the worship assemblies of the church and we may not alter His divine arrangement.

In 1 Corinthians 14 we have an entire chapter devoted to the worship assembly of the church. It gives the regulations that govern all public assemblies the church may conduct. Notice carefully:

1 Corinthians 14:37-38

37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

The rules for the assemblies of the church came directly from the Lord ... they are commandments from the Lord. Verse 38 teaches that if anyone ignores these rules, he will be ignored ... a very serious consequence! We cannot afford to be ignored either by God, or by God's people! If you will take the time to read 1 Corinthians 14 you will discover that among other commandments, the women are to remain silent in the assemblies of the church -- not a very popular thing now days is it?

SUMMARY

So, in summary, the New Testament teaches that we must not neglect the public worship assembly of the church and it also teaches us that we cannot worship in just any place we choose, but we must worship in a congregation that abides by the rules of the public assembly given by God.

We hope you will take these things to heart and seriously consider them. The congregation that brings you this message assembles regularly for public worship and abides by these regulations of God.