

They believe that the body of Christ is therefore a living organism made up of many members united in an unbreakable union (Rom.12:4-5; Eph. 4:1-16).

Because these Scriptures and others teach that God Himself has constituted this organism from the beginning they seek to act upon it by meeting simply as members of the body of Christ.

## THEY HAVE SOUGHT TO RETURN TO NEW TESTAMENT PRACTICES

and not to form a denominational or ecclesiastical organisation. In fact, many of them have purged themselves from such affiliations — to be gathered unto Christ outside the camp bearing His reproach and to give clear expression to this precious truth of the one body (Hebrews 13:13).

They stress that all who have repented and believed the gospel are their brothers and sisters in Christ, and fellow-members of the one body. In as much as the incoming of sectarianism and denominationalism in Corinth was described as carnality by the apostle Paul and was therefore condemned outrightly, these Christians have humbled themselves to heed the appeal of the apostle Paul in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, not to be part of any schisms in Christendom (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-5).

They would therefore love to see all Christians likewise meeting in this simple fashion, giving pre-eminence to the only Head of the body, Our Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18). In their local assemblies, they endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3) by recognising all other assemblies who likewise seek to gather simply to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ on the ground of the one body.

They believe in the presence, leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the assembly (John 14:16-17,26- 16:13-14). Thankfully recognising that they have been made worshippers and given the dignity of priests they desire to give Him complete liberty in their meetings to use whomsoever He wills as His mouth-piece in prayer, praise and in exhortation (1 Peter 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). Understanding that all believers have spiritual gifts given by God, they seek to provide opportunity for the use

of these gifts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God (Rom. 12:5 8; Eph. 4:7-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

If one called by the Lord gives his life to the ministry of the Word or some other service, he goes in his work with the approval and fellowship of his local assembly (Acts 13:1-3;14:26).

This does not suppress his personal responsibility to the Lord as he walks by faith. He remains subject as is every brother and sister to the care and discipline of the assembly.

## LOCAL ASSEMBLY RESPONSIBILITIES

They believe that each local assembly has the responsibility to maintain the holiness of God's house in dependence upon God (Psalm 93:6; 1 Corinthians 6:11-13). This includes a concern and care for one another, as well as giving warning, comfort and support as needed (1 Thess. 5:14). It also includes the putting away of those whose walk or doctrine become evil and the restoration of such when they repent (1 Cor. 6:9-13; 2 John 9-11; 2 Cor. 2:6-11).

They believe that each assembly is a local representation of the whole body and recognise its actions in the Name of the Lord and according to the Word of God as authoritative and binding everywhere (Matthew 18:18).

They believe that Scripture teaches that sisters are to be silent in the meetings of the assembly and that they cover their heads in symbolic recognition of the headship of the man and that the Lord's leadership and glory are to be displayed in the assembly (Corinthians 14:34 35;11:3 13;1 Timothy 2:8 12).

According to Acts 2:42, they have meetings for the ministry of the Word, the breaking of bread and worship, and prayer.

They seek to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine. Therefore they read from the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to give the sense of the reading through whomsoever He wills (1 Tim. 4:13; Neh. 8:8).

## ON THE LORD'S DAY

The Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's supper shortly before His death and solemnly charged His disciples to partake of the bread and wine in remembrance of Himself. It was further revealed to Paul that **"As often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye announce the death of the Lord, until He come"** (1 Corinthians 11:26 JND translation).

Therefore these Christians have sought to steadfastly continue in the breaking of bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ every Lord's Day as practiced in the early church among the disciples: **"And the first day of the week, we being assembled to break bread"** (Acts 20:7(a) JND).

Therefore, if you enter the modest meeting place of Christians gathered to the Lord's Name on a Lord's day morning you will see them gathered around a table upon which is a loaf of bread and a cup of wine. The bread symbolises the body of Christ which was given for us, and the cup symbolises His blood which was shed for us (1 Corinthians 11:23--25). This is the only prominent feature, for there is no presiding clergyman, elder or human being in charge.

If you ask who will dispense the bread and the cup, you will be told that any brother in good standing in the assembly may do so. In this meeting, the believers function as **"an holy priesthood"** to bring praise and worship to the Lord and to remember Him in His death and offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5).

A brother may minister the Word of God after the observance of the Lord's supper or at a separate meeting at a convenient time during the day.

## RECEPTION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

These Christians desire to joyfully receive for the breaking of bread all believers who desire to walk in godliness and truth according to God's Word (Acts 2:41-42).

This reception is to all privileges and responsibilities of assembly life and fellowship. Such believers are received as members of the body of Christ, not as *"members of our church"* since all

Christians become part of the one true church at conversion, and any further membership is unnecessary and divisive (Acts 2:47b).

Reception to the privilege of partaking in the Lord's supper, is not to an *"open"* or a *"closed"* communion, but to a *"guarded"* table of the Lord in responsibility to the Holy character of Him whose death is commemorated.

They believe that those who partake of the Lord's Supper express in this way their remembrance of the Lord. In this act they also partake of the Lord's table, thereby expressing their fellowship and oneness with all others partaking with them of the bread and the cup (1 Cor. 10:14-22).

Having the understanding of these truths, therefore requires partakers to individually examine themselves before partaking of the Lord's Supper, lest they do so unworthily and bring dishonour upon the Lord Jesus whom they are remembering (1 Corinthians 11:27-34).

Partakers also are to individually partake only in assemblies which meet on the ground of the one body, and not on denominational or independent ground. The desire of those who participate in such assemblies is to do so in accordance with the truth of the one body of Christ, whether in their home assembly or when visiting other places.

While rejecting any suggestion that the tables of professing Christian congregations are tables of demons, they fully accept the principle of association taught in 1 Corinthians 10:18,20,21 and therefore desire to partake of the Lord's Supper only where the unity of the body of Christ and the holiness of God's house are understood and accepted.

### ACCOMPLISHED REDEMPTION

These Christians have no uncertain belief in the doctrines as unfolded in the Scriptures:

The fall and absolute ruin of man, his guilty, lost and helpless condition; the utter worthlessness of works, law-keeping or reformation as a ground of salvation; the amazing love of God in providing a Saviour in His blessed Son; the spotless perfection of Christ, both in His Divine nature and His true humanity; reconciliation by the shed blood of Christ on the Cross, by which alone redemption has

been accomplished; His resurrection as the proof of God's acceptance of that atonement.

There is, therefore, no other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved except the Name of the risen Christ, for **"to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins"** (Acts 10:43).

This is the Man who by His own blood entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption. **"And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him"** (Heb. 5:9).

These Christians therefore see that every believer is warranted to have the fullest assurance of their present and eternal salvation, and that this assurance comes not through feelings or experiences, but by Christ's work once and for all. The believer can never be lost, but is as secure as though he were in heaven already because of Christ's death and resurrection (1 John 3:2, John 10:28-30).

They see however that Scripture guards from abuse of this doctrine by insisting upon good works as the fruit of salvation and strictly taking heed to Titus 2:11-15.

### CONCLUSION

The presence in the assembly of the Lord Jesus, who died and rose again from the dead, draws the children of God together by the power of the Holy Spirit. Those gathering together unto His worthy Name affirm by doing so that they recognise His rights and His authority.

They proclaim allegiance to His Word. They confess that He alone is Head of His Church and deserving of pre-eminence in all things. They also proclaim love to all the children of God — a love measured by the twin standards of obedience to God and care for one another (1 John 5:2).

A welcome is extended to anyone interested in hearing the gospel of God's saving grace and ministry of the Word of God to attend meetings of these Christians. As the answer of the Lord Jesus Christ to perplexed and questioning souls was **"come and see"** so we say COME AND SEE (John 1:39).

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## CHRISTIANS WHO MEET ON THE BASIS OF MATTHEW 18,20

**"For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them".**

These are Christians who have sought to be identified with the worthy and pre-eminent Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They meet solely in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ as the divine gathering centre. They refuse as unscriptural, all denominational names, and all systems of human devising for church order. Believing that the assembly is one body, composed of all believers, they refuse to assume any name that is not common to all the people of God, and therefore prefer the simple title of *"Christians"*, *"brethren"*, *"saints"*, etc., which apply to all the children of God.

They believe in the absolute and perfect inspiration of the Bible, which they hold to be, not in name only, but in reality, the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 3:16).

Being convinced of the absolute authority of God's Word and of the completeness of its teachings, these Christians believe in the unity of **"the church of the living God"**, which is **"the pillar and ground of the truth"** (1 Timothy 3:15).

They believe that the one true church of God was formed on earth by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and embraces all who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, as all believers are sanctified and baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Corinthians 12:13).