

Mandate to Assemble, Heb 10:24-25; Encouragement of Fellow Believers from Virtue Love & Divine Good; the Habit of Not Assembling; Sowing Discord

- 13) The writer is promoting the idea of encouragement from one believer to another in a local church. In this circumstance, rather than issue a direct command he uses the hortatory subjunctive of *katanoeō*, which is in itself a form of encouraging an action.
- 14) The two assets to accomplish this are: virtue love and the production of divine good. Both require being in fellowship and making the advance to the sophisticated spiritual life.
- 15) In order to accomplish these things, the members of a local church must assemble. Hebrews 10:25 addresses this with another mandate, this one an imperative of prohibition of the present active participle **ἐγκαταλείπω, enkataleirō**.
- 16) The first thing that must be done is to stop the habitual practice now going on: Stop forsaking!

ἐγκαταλείπω, enkataleirō:

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| present: | Customary: denotes that which habitually occurs, or may be reasonably expected to occur. |
| active: | Messianic Jews who were wavering in their faith are the ones to whom this mandate is addressed but has application throughout the Church Age. Any believer who is in the habit of cutting Bible class produces the action. |
| participle: | Imperative: a command to stop the action that is habitually going on: "Stop forsaking." |

- 1) What is to be stopped is forsaking the "assembling of yourselves together": **ἐπισυναγωγή, episunagōgē**.
- 2) This compound word has three elements: (1) **ἐπί-, epi-** which refers to motion above. (2) **σύν-, sun-** together, and (3) the noun **ἀγωγή, agōgē**: the manner of leading one's life.
- 3) The compound **συναγωγή, sunagōgē** is the root for the English word synagogue which, both in the New Testament and in the present day, refers to the assembly of a Jewish congregation for worship and well as the building in which it meets.
- 4) The concept of assembly is the issue and the writers of the New Testament generally choose the word *ekklēsia* so as to distinguish the assembly of Christians from that of the Jews.

- 5) The writer of Hebrews is unknown by name but it is evident from the Epistle that its text was written by a Jewish Christian. He is writing to Jewish believers in Judea in the year A.D. 67 and is warning them to prepare for disaster. The writer discusses Christianity with a Hebrew vocabulary and instructs them regarding the angelic conflict, the superiority of Christ, disaster testing, spirituality v. carnality, and the function of the royal priesthood.
- 6) In Hebrews 10:25 the writer refers to the assembly of believers not with *ekklēsia* but with *episunagōgē*. Note that this choice adds to the Jewish word for assembly the prefix *epi-* which means over or above.
- 7) *Episunagōgē* occurs only one other time in Scripture and that is in:

2 Thessalonians 2:1 - Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together [*ἐπισυναγωγή ἡμᾶ*, *episunagōgē hama*] to Him.

- 8) The Rapture is the instant assembly of all Church Age believers who are said to be *ἄρπάζω*, *harpazō*: “caught up together,” i.e., both the previously deceased and presently living “to meet the Lord in the air.”
- 9) This assembly is up, over, and above the earth. Likewise, in Hebrews 10:25 the assembly of the local church not only is a congregation of believers who meet together to worship but who must also be in fellowship to do so. As such their function and purpose is directed upward toward God and Christ through the filling of the Holy Spirit.
- 10) When such a circumstance occurs the location is sanctified for the purpose of worship. However, there were those to whom Hebrews was written who were “forsaking the assembling of themselves together.”
- 11) Their absence from the local assembly is said to have been habitual: *ἔθος*, *ethos* which means “habit, custom, or tradition.” The application for this context is addressed in this excerpt:

ἔθος [*ethos*]. Among New Testament occurrences of the word the first meaning is perhaps clearest in Hebrews 10:25, which refers to the “habit of some” of absence from Christian worship (*ἐπισυναγωγή*). The reason for this absence is not mentioned. It need not be habitual negligence, but can include intentional defection that has become the unambiguous tendency of a group which follows a custom different from that of Christian practice. The noteworthy emphasis on the personal practice of Jesus of going to the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39) indicates a distinct personal rule of conduct in which there was a fixed place and affixed time for prayer.¹

¹ Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1:384.

- 12) The mandate is to “not forsake the assembling of yourselves together.” To follow a custom, self-imposed or otherwise, that results in forsaking assembly is thus prohibited.
- 13) APPLICATION: About ten years ago I was approached by Paul Davey who presented the idea of the church having a Web site through which we would broadcast Bible classes live. I agreed to the idea on a trial basis in order to discover how such a medium of communication could be useful.

After being online for several months we realized that the live broadcast enabled members who, because of travel, school commitments, or health reasons, were not able to assemble for midweek classes, could remain current with the ongoing study through this medium.

Later we discovered that people outside the St. Louis metropolitan area were also logging on. This emerged into an Internet congregation affectionately known as the Doritos.

Our local congregation includes members from nine counties in two states. There are many families with both infant and school-aged children. There are many legitimate reasons that many cannot attend midweek classes and these are the primary reasons we provide the live net broadcast.

However, for any who have developed the custom of just staying home because it is easier when otherwise they *could* assemble themselves together, then this verse is for you. So leave the cap on the beer bottle and the clip on the Doritos and get your spotted bottoms to Bible class.

- 14) The next phrase in Hebrews 10:25 gives the importance of assembling ourselves together, the present active participle of the verb:

παρακαλέω, parakaleō – To aid help comfort, and encourage.

present: Perfective; refers to a fact which has come to be in the past but is emphasized as a present reality: “always be encouraging.”

active: Believers assemble in the local church in order to offer encouragement to others in the congregation.

participle: Imperative; this is a command to offer encouragement to your fellow believer.

- 15) The only way that believers can encourage other believers is by associating with them. The function of the body of Christ in a local church demands it.

- 16) This, for some, is a contradiction of the principle of privacy: freedom from unauthorized intrusion; preferring to keep personal affairs to oneself: valuing privacy highly.
- 17) A person who wants to be left alone deserves to be left alone. However, when associations develop, as they inevitably do over time, then knowledge is gained about others.
- 18) This knowledge can result in harmony or contention, the latter becoming the catalyst for mental-attitude sins. Further association provides more opportunities to amplify one's disapproval and the mental-attitude sins are expressed as sins of the tongue.
- 19) This begins a trail of gossip that spreads like a forest fire, an illustration that James uses to denounce a practice that leads to believers committing the greatest sin of all: sowing discord among believers (Proverbs 6:19b).
- 20) It is necessary that the passage in James be given some recognition at this time, although we will grant it thorough analysis when we study the book. The passage is James 3:1-11 and it reads like this in corrected translation:

James 3:1 - My fellow believers, stop becoming teachers, knowing that we shall take on ourselves a more severe judgment.

PRINCIPLE: Do not entertain the idea of usurping the authority of the pastor. If you are in a teaching position in Prep School make sure you are communicating the theology and doctrine that is developed from this pulpit. Certain literature from the writings of R. B. Thieme, Jr., has been approved for the teaching of basic doctrines to Senior Prep School students. Verbalizing objections to what is taught from the pulpit is sowing discord.

James 3:2 - Now we all commit sins. If anyone does not sin in what he says, the same mature believer is able to control his entire body.

PRINCIPLE: If you do not sin in what you say then you have control of your tongue which means you also have control of your entire body. Illustrations follow, the first being that of a horse in: