

The New Testament Assembly



A Pattern to Follow

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The principle of a pattern: the Old and New Testament

In the Old Testament (Exodus 25:1 – 31:18) God gave instructions to Moses with regards to the Tabernacle. Details were given as to its construction, size, materials etc. Instructions were given Moses about the priests and the sacrifices they would do. In all of these details God was giving the Children of Israel a pattern or plan to follow that was His will for them to follow. God did not leave it up to His people to decide upon how they would conduct their worship or the way that they would approach God.

The Children of Israel failed God in many ways but nevertheless the plan that God gave to Moses was perfect and should have been followed by them. There were types and shadows that pointed to the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason the pattern that God gave was very significant and was filled with meaning for the Jewish people.

Later in the history of the children of Israel there was a king named David who had it in his heart to build a place for God to dwell amongst His people in Jerusalem. The house of the Lord was not to be built by David because he was a man of war but David was allowed to make provision for the building of it. The actual construction was given to David's son Solomon who was to be king after David. Just like there was a pattern given by God for the tabernacle there were also instructions given for the House of God. Read 1st Chronicles 28:11, 12, 19 to see that God had His way that things should be for the Temple. David had it in his heart to do this for God but David wanted what would please the Lord.

Again the children of Israel failed in many ways but that doesn't change the fact that God had a way that He wanted things to be. Literally books of additions that were not according to the pattern of God were added by the religious leaders. They failed to see the types and shadows' pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ but the pattern was still given by God and was therefore the way that He wanted it to be.

In the New Testament, then, we see that God also had a way that He wanted His people to gather. The instructions for gathering are not to be found under one heading, such as "The Local Assembly", but are found interspersed throughout the New Testament. Sometimes we find part of the pattern in the practice of the early believers as they were taught to do as in Acts 20:7. Sometimes we find part of the pattern in a situation where a problem in an assembly is addressed as in 1st Corinthians 5:1-13, where we see the need for discipline of immorality. Of course, there are times when we find instructions for gathering given directly as just that, instructions for gathering, as we find in 1st Timothy 3:1-15 as regards to the qualifications of those who would have a care for, and take responsibility for, the Local Assembly. So to find the pattern for gathering in the New Testament, it will not be found in one concise section, as we find The Tabernacle, but throughout The New Testament. It will be necessary to look at this subject from an overview of the practice of the early believers and the teachings of the Lord and the apostles, whether relating to a particular need in an assembly or simply teaching given directly as regards to Assembly Truths.

The Church which is His Body and the Local Assembly

In any study of the New Testament Assembly it is very important to see the difference between The Church which is His Body and The Local Assembly. There are similarities between the Body of Christ and the Local Assembly but these two subjects are very much distinct from each other. For example: The moment that a person is saved by putting their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour that person is placed into the Body of Christ but that same person is not in a Local Assembly the moment they are saved. Another example is that the Body of Christ consists of all who have been, and will be, saved from the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4 until the rapture of the Church. It is obvious that all of these believers are not in a Local Assembly. It would be impossible for all believers, even those alive presently, to gather in one place at one time but it is possible for all believers to be in the Church which is His Body at one time, though in many different localities.

We will look at five verses dealing with the Church which is His Body and then look at five verses dealing with the Local Assembly to see the distinction that God has given to these two subjects.

The Church which is His Body – 5 basic verses

- Matthew 16:18 in this verse we read of the Lord Jesus speaking of the Church that even the gates of hell would not be able to prevail against it. This church is indestructible but a Local Assembly could be attacked from without or within and eventually cease to exist.
- Ephesians 4:4 in this verse we read of one body, which if it was referring to a Local Assembly would mean that the whole Body would be in one place, which is impossible, so we are reading of the Church which is His Body.
- Ephesians 5:25 in this verse we read of the love of the Lord Jesus for the Church and how He gave Himself for it. This certainly could not be limited to one Local Assembly as there are many believers around the World.
- Colossians 1:18 in this verse we see that the lord Jesus is the Head of the Body, the Church. We don't read of many churches in this verse but one Church.
- Colossians 1:24 in this verse we read of the Body and the Church together in one verse as in Colossians 1:18. This cannot, obviously, be limited to the believers in Colosse so refers to the totality of all believers.

The Local Assembly – 5 basic verses

- Matthew 18:15 – 20 in these verses we see teaching, by the Lord Jesus, on the subject of a brother trespassing against another brother, Instruction is given on how to deal with the problem. There is obviously a group of believers who have been gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ in a certain locality. Authority is given to the Assembly of believers to deal with the problem according to the instructions given by the Lord. It would be impossible to gather all believers in the Church which is His Body to deal with the problem so the Local Assembly is the church here.
- Acts 8:1 in this verse we read of a gathering of believers in a certain locality, Jerusalem. The church here consists of all those who were in this Assembly at this time of Saul's persecution.
- Acts 9:31 in this verse we read of a number of churches in different localities. In the areas of Judea, Galilee and Samaria there were a number of Assemblies of believers gathered together.
- 1st Corinthians 1:2 in this verse we read of a gathering of believers in Corinth. This gathering is referred to as the Church of God which is at Corinth, a Local Assembly.
- 2nd Corinthians 11:28 in this verse Paul's care for all the churches is seen. These are a number of different Assemblies in many different areas but each one is a distinct church.

What is a Local Assembly of Christians ?

The meaning of the word church (ekklesia), in the New Testament is simply, "a called out company". This word could be used for any company of people gathered for any specific reason. For example: in Acts 19:32, 39, 41 the word used for assembly is "ekklesia". In this portion the assembly is not a gathering of Christians but rather a gathering of people that were upset with the Gospel being preached in their town.

Going back to the principle of a pattern for the New Testament Assembly we find very distinct marks of what a Local Assembly is. The first mention of a Local Assembly is in Matthew 18:15 – 20. At the time that the Lord Jesus said this there was still much more of the pattern to be given later but there are already distinct marks given here. Let us look at them.

- There is a company of believers called a "Church" or a called out company, in verse 17. This is a distinct group or gathering of believers.
- This called out company seeks to cause the offending party to listen to their plea for correction of the offense. This Assembly also carries with it authority to discipline the one who is the offending party. We see this in verse 17. The authority that this Assembly has is given to it from Heaven, according to verse 18.
- The company is exhorted to pray to the Father and is given a promise of an answer in verse 19.
- This Local Assembly has been gathered together at a point of time in the past and they continue to the present. The tense in verse 20 for "gathered together" is literally "having been gathered together".
- The Local Assembly is "gathered together" not disjointed and coming and going as one wills but a continuing together.
- There is only one name that they are gathered in or unto. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- There is the promised presence of the Lord Jesus being in the midst of the Local Assembly.

So we see from first mention of a Local Assembly that we are not left in the dark as to what the Lord wants for His people with regards to gathering. A simple definition of a Local Assembly is: A called out company of believers, gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ in a certain locality.

What is a Local Assembly ? by Norman Crawford

- An Assembly is a company of baptized believers (Acts 2:41), gathered unto the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 18:20; 1st Cor. 1:1-9, 5:4), who meet regularly in a particular locality according to the pattern found in the New Testament in Acts 2:41, 42 and developed fully in such epistles as 1st Cor. and 1st Tim.
- Such an Assembly is a spiritual fellowship (1st Cor. 10:16, 17), which is expressed visibly as they meet for the breaking of bread, prayer, collective testimony, the teaching of the Word of God, and preaching of the Gospel.
- They have been gathered together by the Holy Spirit (Mark 14:13; Rom. 8:14), their sole authority is the Word of God (2nd Tim. 3:16, 17), and they have the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ to be in their midst (Matt. 18:20).
- They are a residence of the Holy Spirit on earth, so they are a holy temple unto the Lord (1st Cor. 3:15, 16).
- Such an Assembly is guided by godly overseers and served by faithful deacons in both temporal and spiritual ministry (1st Tim. 3:1 -16).
- The priesthood of all believers is exercised in worship, praise and prayer, and the gifts, given by the risen Head of the church (Eph. 4:8 – 13), have liberty to function under the control of the Holy Spirit (1st Cor. 14:23 – 40).
- There is a clear line of demarcation between the within and the without of an Assembly and purity is maintained by a careful, compassionate and godly exercise of discipline (1st Cor. 5:1 – 13).

The Purposes of the Local Assembly

In any of God's patterns we see that He has a purpose for what He does. Whether we look at natural things or supernatural things we see purpose in it all. The very fact that there is design in creation shows us that God had a plan for what He has made. God's plan in creation has some basic purposes such as: to bring Him glory and show His great ability (Psalm 19:1), to be a witness of the very fact that there is a God to all peoples (Psalm 19:2 – 6), to bring God pleasure (Revelation 4:11), to be a blessing to mankind (Genesis 1:29).

The Local Assembly is not just something that fell out of a tree but something that has been planned with purposes in mind, so let's look at those purposes.

The Glory of God

This would be, of course, the primary purpose of a Local Assembly, to bring glory or honour to God. We see in 1st Corinthians 10:31 that a person in a Local Assembly needs to do all they do to the glory of God. This purpose of bringing glory to God in an Assembly will affect every aspect of the gathering. It will cause the company to seek the will of God, as revealed in the Word of God, in all matters relating to the Assembly. As the Assembly seeks the glory of God in all things this will also be to the maximum

blessing and help to the Assembly and its testimony.

The Pleasure of God

God desires to receive pleasure out of a Local Assembly. Like the glory of God, the pleasure of God will keep the Assembly in a condition that is pleasing to Him. We can see that there are conditions that do not bring pleasure to Him. In 1st Corinthians, chapters 1 – 6 there is much correction given to the Assembly at Corinth. Also in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 there is rebuke to different Assemblies for their ways that were not pleasing to the Lord. We also see that individuals in an Assembly can affect things to cause that the Lord does not find pleasure. An example of this is in 3rd John v. 9, 10.

In 1st Corinthians 3:9 the Assembly at Corinth is called God's husbandry or tilled field. God is seeking fruit from this field for Himself, for His pleasure. God is working in this field to bring about this fruit for Himself. Examples of this fruit are varied. In an Assembly what appears to be a little thing is just as pleasing to the Lord as what appears a large thing. An act of kindness towards a fellow believer may seem insignificant but it is what brings pleasure to the Lord when we love one another. As an Assembly seeks to follow the pattern in the Scriptures for a Local Assembly it will bring pleasure to the Lord. So we see that our attitude is important as well as following the Word of God to bring pleasure to Him.

A place of worship

The single most important aspect of a believer's life is the worship of God. Of course one does not have to be gathered with the Local Assembly to worship but to be in an Assembly of believers gives one the opportunity to express worship to God out of ones heart together with the rest of the believers. In Philippians 3:3 we read that believers are those who worship God in the Spirit. The believers knew of this experience regularly as they gathered together. When the Assembly is gathered together for the Breaking of the Bread worship is expressed more than any other meeting because the saints are recalling the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. We also see that worship is expressed when the Assembly is gathered together to pray as in Acts 4:24 – 30. The believers felt their need to ask the Lord for boldness to preach the Gospel but began praying with thoughts of worship to God.

Worship in an Assembly is not limited to the males but the audible expression of worship is. We read in 1st Corinthians 14:34, 35 that the women in an Assembly are to remain silent. All of the believers should be in an attitude of worship. A sister's worship is just as pleasing to the Lord as a brother's but in the pattern for the New Testament Assembly she is commanded to remain silent when the Assembly is gathered together. God does not consider women to be any less but He has an order for His people in His Word when they are gathered together.

A place of safety and blessing

Another purpose for the Local Assembly is to be a place of safety and blessing for the people of God. In Hebrews 10:25 believers are commanded to remain faithful to the Local Assembly. This command is not without purpose.

Because the Local Assembly has been designed by the Lord there are aspects of that design that ensure the spiritual safety of all those who form the Assembly. By design each Assembly must have at least two elders who care for and protect the Local Assembly. The elders are responsible to the Lord Himself for the wellbeing of each one in the Assembly. As we read in Hebrews 13:17 the elders watch for our souls. Each person in an Assembly has a concern for the others and therefore when one is down or tempted there is help available.

We see from the seven letters written to the seven Assemblies in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, that there is warning given from the Lord Himself when an Assembly is having difficulty or going astray. The Holy Spirit is free to lead ministry given that will preserve or correct those in the company. Often when ministry is given there is a preserving effect as the Lord anticipates what lies ahead for His people and prepares them for the difficulty. We see an example of this in First and Second Thessalonians as Paul sought to encourage the believers in their persecution and correct false teaching with regards to the second coming of the Lord and also correct some who were unwilling to work for a living.

A place of fellowship

The word most commonly used word for fellowship in the New Testament simply means, communion or sharing in common. Fellowship in a Local Assembly is a privilege that each one in the Assembly can and should share in. We have communion or share in our appreciation of Christ and His work, in the study of the Word of God, in one another's blessings and needs, and in the furtherance of the Gospel.

Fellowship is one of the things that is mentioned in Acts 2:42 that the believers continued in steadfastly or continually. The Assembly at Corinth was told that they were called unto the fellowship of God's Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1st Corinthians 1:9). This was a sharing in common of the Lord Jesus. We also see that Assembly fellowship is a holy fellowship because we are told that we are not to have any fellowship with evil (1st Corinthians 10:20, Eph. 5:11). We share in one another's practical needs also, as we find in 2nd Corinthians 8:4 and Philippians 1:5. We have fellowship in the things written in the Word of God as in the sharing of what is written concerning God's Son (1st John 1:3). The Holy Spirit directs us into fellowship with one another, so this is not something that we work up on our own (Philippians 2:1). We also share in our sufferings for Christ as we read in Philippians 3:10.

As we can see, fellowship is a very important and purposeful part of a Local Assembly. Fellowship has been designed by God for the benefit of the believers in the Assembly. Fellowship has also been designed to draw us on further in our appreciation

of the Lord and His things. This deeper appreciation will cause the Assembly to further bring glory to the Lord and be further built up.

A place of service and priesthood

The Local Assembly is a place where we serve God and His people. Each believer in an assembly has the privilege and responsibility to function in service for God and His people.

In the Old Testament the priesthood was limited. Only Aaron and his descendants and the tribe of Levi could function as priests. But in the New Testament pattern we find that all believers have the opportunity to serve as priests, both male and female. In 1st Peter 2:5 we read of a holy priesthood (for God) and in verse 9 a royal priesthood (for man). There is no distinction in this passage as to gender or nationality or any other class, so all believers are able to function as priests in the Local Assembly.

The two functions of believers as priests in an assembly are to serve God and to serve man. In worship and praise we primarily serve God as a holy priest. In seeking to serve one another and our fellow man we primarily serve as a royal priest. In the Local Assembly each one functions in their particular sphere. The women are told to be silent in the gatherings in 1st Corinthians 14:34, 35 and 1st Timothy 2:12. The men are told to lead the assembly in prayer, to teach, to preach the Word of God, to function publicly in the gatherings. There are guidelines given for those who are to be the deacons and those who are to be the elders in 1st Timothy 3:1-13. These are just some examples of the different functions of those in an assembly. All are needed, not one is there to just go along for the ride as it were. The Lord has designed it this way so that all grow and no one person has the preeminence except the Lord Himself.

A place of testimony for the Lord

This purpose of the Local Assembly is important in that if there are no new converts added to the assembly the assembly will cease to exist when those in fellowship have passed away. The assembly gathered in Thessalonica had a tremendous testimony that reached to other districts. We read in 1st Thessalonians 1:7-10 of the great change in their lives and the outreach of the assembly to other areas. In 2nd Thessalonians 3:1, 2 Paul asks the assembly to pray that the word preached by Paul, Silas and Timothy would be blessed by the Lord. The Thessalonians were concerned for the preaching of the Gospel in other areas so they would be sure to pray for this. In Acts 13:1-3 it was the exercise of the assembly in Antioch to send out Paul and Barnabas to take the Gospel to far places. The assembly was willing to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit with regards to this work. In Acts 21:18-20 the elders of the Assembly in Jerusalem rejoiced in the report of the Gospel work to far lands.

In Acts 2:14 we read of Peter standing up with the eleven as he preached the Gospel on the day of Pentecost. This mutual support of the believers for one another in their witness is a tremendous help and encouragement. All in the assembly share in the

blessing of a combined effort of outreach by the assembly. In Acts 4:23-30 Peter and John after being held prisoners for their testimony, went back to the believers gathered together and shared their experience with them. The whole assembly prayed for boldness to continue to witness to the people in spite of the persecution. In Acts 9:31 we read of the assemblies being multiplied during a time of rest from the persecution. We read of increase in the assemblies in Acts 16:5. In Paul's letter to the believers gathered in Rome he sought to encourage them in Gospel work by writing of his example in Romans 1:16. In Romans 16:1-15 we read of many men and women who were a great help to Paul and the assemblies in the work of the Lord, whether it be in service to believers or in helping in Gospel outreach work.

In 1st Corinthians 14:23-25 the assembly at Corinth is instructed with regards to how their meetings will be viewed by those that are not in fellowship, whether saved or not. It was important that the meetings were understandable for all so that it would be a good testimony and that those that are not in fellowship will see that God is in them as in v. 25.

In Galatians Paul writes to correct wrong teaching about their relationship to the Mosaic Law. They had been turned away from Christ after the Law to follow its teachings. This would certainly effect the clarity and purity of the message that they preached as an assembly. It is important that the assembly is well grounded in the basic Gospel truths.

In Ephesians 6:15 the assembly is encouraged to be ready to preach the Gospel whenever the opportunity comes.

In Paul's letter to the assembly in Philippi he expresses his appreciation for their prayers in ch. 1:19. In Philippians 1:27-30 Paul seeks to encourage them to go on in Gospel work together even though they are suffering for it. In ch. 4:10-19 Paul expresses his thanks for their practical help in the work of the Lord that Paul was doing.

It is clear to see that the consistent outreach of the Local Assembly in the Gospel is a vital part of the assembly and its activities.

A place of pasture for the sheep

In Acts 20:28 Paul tells the elders from Ephesus to "feed the church of God". Paul is referring to the Local Assembly here. This spiritual food is from the Word of God. In John 10:9 the Lord Jesus spoke of His sheep finding pasture in. This is a very necessary part of a believer's life, without food we will soon be starving and get away from the Lord.

In a Local Assembly there is opportunity for the sheep to receive this spiritual food. There are men who are gifted to bring this food out of the Word of God and give it to the saints. Paul sought to encourage Timothy to do this very thing in 2nd Timothy 3:16 where he wrote of the value of the Word of God for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. We see the believers in the first assembly continued in the apostle's doctrine in Acts 2:42.

In 1st Corinthians 3:1-4 Paul writes of feeding the saints with milk and desiring to feed them with meat. They were not in a proper spiritual condition to have the meat

because there were divisions among them that hindered growth. The writer to the Hebrews, in Hebrews 5:11-14 desired to feed the believers with meat but they were not able to handle it because they had become dull of hearing or lazy concerning the things of God. We can see from this that even though there is pasture available there are conditions that hinder the feeding of the sheep.

The practices of the Local Assembly

As we look at the teachings of the apostles and the practices of the believers that formed the assemblies in the New Testament we can see that there are ways that the Lord wants His people to gather. Things are not left up to individual assemblies to decide for themselves but the pattern is there in the Word of God for us to follow.

The forming of a Local Assembly

In Acts 18:1-11 we read of Paul, Silas and Timothy coming to Corinth for the first time. They preached the Gospel there and there were people saved. We read in verse 11 that they stayed in Corinth for a year and a half teaching the Word of God among them. It is very clear that an assembly was formed in Corinth during that time. So we see that there were souls saved, baptized and then an assembly was formed. The believers would have been taught the pattern for gathering and then followed that pattern. The believers needed to be obedient to the Word of God and follow what was taught them. The teaching was the same for each locality. In 1st Corinthians 7:17 Paul writes of the teachings being the same for all the churches.

Reception to a Local Assembly

In the New Testament we have different aspects of reception to a Local Assembly. First there is the new believer who desires to be in fellowship in their locality. Second there is the believer who is traveling from one area to another desiring to be received by another assembly. Third there is a believer who has left or been excommunicated from an assembly who will be restored to the fellowship of the assembly.

First is the new believer. A person has received the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour and Lord and been baptized desires to be gathered with the believers in a certain area. This person would have been exposed to the teachings about the pattern by this time and having seen the truth about gathering would make their desire known to the assembly. The elders of the assembly would speak with the believer to determine whether anything would hinder their being received and then the matter would be made known to the assembly and then the assembly would receive the believer to the fellowship of the Local Assembly. We see this simple pattern in 1st Corinthians 14:16 where there is a place for those who are unlearned or new believers and not in fellowship yet. After they see that the scriptural pattern is being practiced then they would desire hopefully to be gathered with the believers.

Second is a believer who desires to be received to another assembly. Letters of commendation are sent along with believers going from one place to another. A number of places in the scriptures show this. One example is 2nd Corinthians 3:1 where we read of letters of commendation. In Acts 9:26-28 Paul was received into the assembly at Jerusalem on the testimony of Barnabas. So we see that those received into an assembly are either commended from another assembly or known somehow by the believers to be in fellowship.

Third is a believer who had left or been disciplined by the assembly. The person who left of course would come to a point where they would desire to be in fellowship again and then the assembly would receive them back again. The person who had been under discipline would have a life that would be corrected before reception could even be considered. In 1st Corinthians 5:1-5 a person who had committed fornication was put out of the assembly because of their sin but in 2nd Corinthians 2:6-11 Paul instructs the assembly to receive the person back into fellowship as there was true repentance and the person would be overcome if no restoration was brought about.

Leadership in the Local Assembly

In the Local Assembly there is leadership established by God for the well being of the assembly. The elders are always mentioned in the plural, there is never to be one person who is in control. In fact in 3rd John vs. 9, 10 there was a man who was seeking to control things in the assembly and this practice meets with much opposition from the apostle.

The qualifications for an elder are listed in 1st Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These men have a care for the believers and seek to be shepherds of the flock. We are told to obey them in Hebrews 13:17. We are told to treat them with respect in 1st Timothy 5:1 and to submit to them in 1st Peter 5:5.

The elder's responsibility is to care for the flock in protecting and feeding the sheep. The Holy Spirit has fitted them for this work as we read in Acts 20:28.

Teaching in the Local Assembly

The Lord has given teachers to teach the Word of God to the believers for their instruction. We see in Ephesians 4:11 that teachers are given to teach the saints. There are opportunities for teaching in public meetings as well as in private. In Acts 20:20 Paul taught the believers in their homes and in public meetings.

There is the possibility of wrong teaching by some, so we are encouraged to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. Teaching can be from basic doctrines to deep things or strong meat. We should seek to receive teaching with an open heart and be willing to put it into practice in our lives.

In the last days we read in 2nd Timothy 4:3 and 2nd Peter 2:1 that there will be false teachers that will seek to turn away the people of God from the truth. These warnings are very applicable to us today as we see some who try to undermine or take away the truths concerning the Local Assembly and many other important truths. The

Local Assembly is to be the pillar and ground of the truth as we read in 1st Timothy 3:15.

Growth and developing gift in the Local Assembly

In the assembly individuals are encouraged to grow and develop their gift. Paul told Timothy to be careful not to neglect his gift in 1st Timothy 4:14. Each believer has a purpose to fulfill for the Lord. The Lord will fit each one to do that work but it requires our being willing and able to do that work. We see in 1st Corinthians 12:1 – 14:40 we read of gifts and their functioning. Each believer has something to do for the Lord, all are needed.

1st Peter 2:2 tells us that by reading and obeying the Word of God that we will grow. In 1st Corinthians 3:9 the assembly is God's garden and God's building. He works in it to bring about growth and building up of the assembly.

Developing gift is by using one's gift. There are many kinds of gifts. The gift of being a help in any way to the people of God is something very needful but not given much recognition. One needs to use one's gift to become more useful and gain wisdom and experience in many different situations. In a Local Assembly opportunity is given to exercise or use one's gift for the benefit of the whole assembly.

Headship in the Local Assembly

The Lord has established order in the assembly for men and women. We read in 1st Corinthians 11:1-16 that the Lord has, in His wisdom, given guidelines for men and women in the assembly. The woman is to take her place under the authority of the man. It is a matter of order not inferiority. It is also a picture of how the church is subject to the Lord so the woman is subject to the man. The woman's head is to be covered when gathered in the assembly so as to bring glory to her head, the man, being a picture of the church bringing glory to her head the Lord. The man's head is to be uncovered to bring glory to his head, Christ.

The woman is not permitted to speak or to teach in the assembly as we read in 1st Corinthians 14:34; 1st Timothy 2:11, 12. In Titus 2:3-5 the older women are told to teach the younger women things regarding their families and their behaviour.

The gatherings of the Local Assembly

In Matthew 18:20 we read of a company of believers that have been gathered together at a point of time in the past. This initial forming of the assembly has taken place but we read in Acts 2:41, 42 that there is a continuing of meeting together by the believers.

There are different times that the believers met together. They met together for the Breaking of Bread on the first day of the week according to Acts 20:7. At the same time these believers met for the preaching of the Word of God. We see gathering for prayer in Acts 12:5. A missionary report meeting is seen in Acts 14:27. In 1st Corinthians 5:1-5 there is a meeting to deal with one who had sinned and needed to be

disciplined. In Acts 15:6 we see that elders got together to discuss and seek the mind of the Lord in things that came up.

2nd Thessalonians 2:1 says that we gather together unto Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, at the rapture of the church. In the same way we gather together unto Him alone, as the same word is used in Hebrews 10:25, when we gather together as a Local Assembly. We are exhorted in Hebrews 10:25 to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

The collections of the Local Assembly

The collections of the assembly are for various needs. The needs of the assembly itself, the needs of the workers, the needs of believers in other parts or any who are in need of help. The Lord's things are to be funded by the believers themselves not by fund raisers or any other money making scheme. Giving is to be done as one can afford or, as we read in 1st Corinthians 16:2, as the Lord has prospered them. Giving should be done willingly and happily as we read in 2nd Corinthians 9:7. Giving is done on a weekly basis as written in 1st Corinthians 16:2.

Discipline and restoration in the Local Assembly

In 1st Corinthians 5:1-13 and 2nd Corinthians 2:6-11 show us that discipline in an assembly is sometimes a necessary thing to maintain the purity of the assembly. In the case in 1st Corinthians chapter 5 the sin was fornication. There is a list in verse 11 of the chapter of other sins that require excommunication. The purpose of this discipline is to see the person restored to the Lord and the assembly as this man was in 2nd Corinthians chapter 2. The intentional teaching of doctrinal error in 1st Timothy 1:20 was a sin that required excommunication as well.

There are two other forms of discipline in the scriptures. First one can be rebuked before the assembly as in 1st Timothy 5:20. Second there is an avoiding of one who has sinned as in 2nd Thessalonians 3:14, 15.

Until He comes !

The pattern given us in the New Testament is until the Lord comes for His own people. We read in 1st Corinthians 11:23-26 that we are to keep the command of remembering Him until He comes. These truths will never be changed or altered to suit man's ways. They are just as needful and important as when they were first given by the Lord to the apostles. There will be times of departure and testing but we are, nevertheless, to hold fast to these things until the trumpet is heard and we gather together with the Lord in the air.

May this little study be a help for us to go on for Him alone gathering to His blessed name in the simplicity of the New Testament Assembly.