

A Church Kitchen at Jerusalem?

One of our readers asked for help in responding to a brother who is defending church kitchens on this basis: *how do we know the Jerusalem church didn't have one to use in the daily serving of food to its widows (Acts 6:1-6)?*

First, the question is not, how do we know they didn't have a kitchen?; it is, how do we know they did? We can only follow the apostolic pattern (Philippians 3:17) by observing what the Bible says the early Christians did. Guessing about things they might have done, but things about which the Bible says nothing, opens the door to endless innovations.

Second, I doubt the Jerusalem church even had a building at this point in its existence, much less a kitchen! There was so much poverty in the group that many were having to sell land or houses just to meet the physical needs of their brethren (Acts 4:34-35). Given that, and the fact that their number quickly swelled into the thousands (Acts 2:41; 4:4), where would they have gotten the funds to build a meeting house sufficient for so many? Acts 2:46 points to the temple courts as their meeting place.

Third, the only justification for a church having *any* facility is that it is a means of carrying out the work God has assigned the church (collectively). A building is authorized because we are commanded to assemble for worship (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7; etc.). Classrooms for edification/instruction in God's word might be included (Ephesians 4:11-12; etc.). If one is going to argue in favor of a gym, he must show that recreation is a church function. If one is going to argue in favor of a kitchen and eating hall, he must show that eating is a church function. Facilities for doing unauthorized things are themselves unauthorized. If the New Testament contained any commands or examples that made dinners and recreation the church's work, brethren would not resort to arguments such as the one we are considering. Not only are there no positive statements to support such things, Paul's prohibitions in 1 Corinthians 11 explicitly place eating in the realm of the home, not the church. "What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? . . . If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home . . ." (vss. 22, 34).

Fourth, who's kidding whom? What church has so many members lacking food and cooking capability that a kitchen in the meeting house is legitimately the most practical way to provide for them? And more to the point, in what congregation is preparing meals for indigent members the exclusive, or even the primary, use of such facilities? It is dishonest to justify building a facility for one purpose, then switching (perhaps all the while planning) to use it for others. By such tactics we might console ourselves, but God is not deceived.

- by Frank Himmel

"Depart From Me ..."

The Bible says in Matthew 7:22-23, "*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*"

Many, many, today fall into the category mentioned. They are making all kinds of claims of doing "worthy works" and always, "in the name of the Lord." Just to make a declaration that a thing is "in the name of the Lord" or by his authority, doesn't make it so. Some of these have been exposed as religious frauds. The word "iniquity" as is used in the quoted verse is translated by the word "lawlessness" in several other translations. That is, these people the Lord was talking about were spiritual "outlaws." They were doing their "wonderful" works outside the realm of Bible authority.

But hear what the Lord says their end will be: "*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [or lawlessness].*"

- by Bob Craig

Lack Of Confidence In God

The besetting sin of the human family is a lack of confidence in God, manifested in every kind of departure from the word of God. If our confidence in God were what it should be, we would

never want to turn aside from his way.

Eve lacked confidence in God, and so she followed the devil; Adam lacked confidence in God, and so he followed his wife. Why did Abel do what God said and why did not Cain do what God said? Abel had confidence enough in God to follow his commands; Cain did not.

No man today would depart from the plain word of God if he had full confidence in God; and the elders of Israel would not have asked for a king, had they not lacked confidence in God's way.

- by R. L. Whiteside

But, What About Him?

When Jesus, after His resurrection, was challenging Peter about his devotion and foretelling the events that would befall him in the future (John 21:15ff), Peter turned to John and said "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Many have speculated that Peter was attempting to deflect the harsh light of scrutiny from himself and get the attention directed toward someone else. Jesus answered: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

If we were to put this into our own words, Jesus basically told Peter that it was none of his business what would happen to John, and that he needed to take care of his own matters. Peter's effort to shift the attention from himself was petty and immature. It was a like a child being scolded for misconduct. The typical reaction of the child is to point a finger at another child and say "but, what about him?" Parents can 'see right through' this tactic – and so can the Lord!

Unfortunately, many Christians display this same immature reaction when they have sinned and others are trying to restore them. They are quick to point at someone else in the church that has sinned in the past, or one who is currently dealing with a spiritual issue. They complain that others have not been dealt with consistently, or that they are being unfairly singled out.

Should we be consistent in dealing with all brethren who need to repent? Yes, of course! Can we do better? Without a doubt! But that is not the immediate concern of the one who is, himself, in need of restoration. Until he has corrected his own problems he needs to understand that other situations are 'none of his business'. Jesus would say, "What is that to thee?" Think!

- by Greg Gwin