

RETURNING TO THE PHYSICAL CHURCH AFTER COVID-19

Hebrews 10:25 *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

The children of Israel never got the opportunity to assemble themselves together in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Egypt for 400 years. Imagine being in a lockdown for 400 years and the name of the virus is Pharaoh! Thank God we have digital communication applications such as Zoom which gave us a semblance of church – at least we heard the word of God, prayed and worshipped. Sadly, there was no preaching, exhortation, singing and worship to God for 400 years in Egypt. Pharaoh made sure they never got time to assemble in the name of Jehovah. On the contrary, Pharaoh managed the lives of the Hebrews slaves in such a way that their energy and waking hours were consumed in building idols and monuments for Pharaoh, such as the city of Ramses. “Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses” (Exodus 1:11).

Apostolics must understand the enemy will do everything in his power to stop us from assembling together in the name of Jesus. Why was Pharaoh so stubborn that he was willing for Egypt to suffer so many plagues that the land was brought to the brink of destruction? Simply because the Devil cannot stand the church assembling together; his kingdom will be destroyed. What was the incredible power that assembled 2 million Israelites after 400 years of being churchless? It was and will always be the blood of the Lamb.

Exodus 12:25 *And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.*

Exodus 12:26 *And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?*

Exodus 12:27 *That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.*

What gives us the power to assemble physically in Jesus name? Let us say in unison – the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus! Notice one very important thing about the scriptures above: it was the lamb that gave Israel the power to assemble and Israel was expected to remember this by coming together to Jerusalem every year to keep the Passover. In other words, the lamb gathered Israel and the lamb kept gathering Israel together from generation to generation. Let us have confidence that Jesus, the Lamb of God, will give us the power to

assemble in church from week to week, year to year until he returns. I plead with you to remember that the blood of the Lamb was shed for us to go to church. I urge you to remember that the power of the blood of the Lamb, Jesus, will give you the necessary love, desire, discipline and understanding to never forsake the assembling of the church together. Remember it was the blood of the Lamb which gave you and I the power to come out from the world, and this same blood will keep us faithful to the church of Jesus Christ.

1Peter 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

1Peter 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

The time is now coming for Apostolics in Europe to return to the physical assembling of the church as we did before Covid-19 scattered us. No force known to humans has ever stopped the church from assembling together in Jesus name. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Please say with me: “It is time to assemble ourselves together physically in the name of Jesus.” I am aware that some of our churches have already maintained the practice of physical gatherings in the church, but I am afraid this does not apply to all our churches in Europe – so please bear with me. Either way, this message is an opportunity to reflect upon the importance of the need to physically attend church.

The biggest mistake the Kings of Babylon and Persia made was to allow Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to assemble together for the purpose of prayer, fasting and mutual encouragement. Somehow, thankfully, God blinded these kings from seeing the source of their strength in exile in Babylon. Please understand and appreciate the source of the strength of the Apostolic church – it is the assembling of ourselves together in Jesus’ saving name to stay strong.

Daniel 2:17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions:

Daniel 2:18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Let us make a commitment to each other like these four Hebrew children; let us do our best to stay together, commune together, pray together, fast together and kings will pay attention to us – kings will seek our advice and respect our God Jesus Christ. Amen! Saul was successful in separating David and Jonathan – two men who truly loved the God of Israel and the fellowship of the righteous. It was not King Saul but the evil spirit in him who determined to separate David and Jonathan. The Devil knew that he could not allow David and Jonathan to meet together regularly. If David was slaying giants like Goliath and 10,000 Philistines, as the women sang, the Devil had good reason to worry about Jonathan joining David to fight the battles of the Lord. “How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?” (Deuteronomy 32:30).

***1Samuel 18:10** And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand.*

***1Samuel 18:11** And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.*

Tragically, Jonathan died together with Saul. Had he chosen to join David, he would have lived. Why don't you say by faith, “I will join David and live! I will join the church of the living God and live to do the work of Jesus!” Amen! Brothers and Sisters, please take care! The Devil will throw javelins to divide us from David. Saul called Jonathan the son of a foolish woman. He reminded him of the kingdom of Israel which David would inherit and he would lose, if he took the side of David. The enemy may tempt and deceive you to hate someone in the church because they may be gifted like David. Just keep ducking and avoiding the words and javelins of Saul. “For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God” (I Chronicles 12:22). God will increase his church physically! Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves!

***2Thess 2:1** Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him.*

***1Thess 4:16** For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

The same Greek word in Hebrews 10:25 (assembling; *episynagōgē*) is translated “gathering together” in 2Thessalonians 2:1. In other words, each time the church gathers together in Jesus name, we are witnessing to that greatest of all prophetic events – the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for his church. Amen! Those who love to gather physically in Jesus

name, will not miss the day when Jesus returns physically to physically gather his church. Clearly, the Greek word *episynagōgē* refers to a literal, real and physical assembling of the people of Jesus Christ. Remember what was said in the beginning of this study: each time the people of God gather together in his name, it is only by the power of his blood. We also read that the final gathering of the church in the air will also be with a shout from the Lord Jesus Christ. May Jesus shout into our lives right now to assemble us out of our homes after a year and half of lockdown in Jesus name! Let us say in unison – shout Lord Jesus and gather the church together!

Haggai 1:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

Haggai 1:8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

Haggai 1:9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

Haggai 1:10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

No one seemed to understand the importance of the house of God in the days of Haggai. Everyone was more concerned for his or her house and business while God's house, the church, was neglected. God wanted his house to be built so his people could repent, worship, sing and hear the word of God. Our houses can never compete with the house of God. Last week I taught about the importance of tithing and the number ten. Let me conclude this week by reminding the church that tithing is not sufficient for God to open the windows of heaven – assembling ourselves in the house of God is equally important, according to Haggai. Let us first attend to the house of God. After a long season of staying away from God's house, let us find our suits and dresses again; let us drive or use the buses and trains again; let us make the house of God our house again. Let us repent in his house, hear his word, shout Hallelujah and greet our brothers and sisters in the loving name of Jesus again!

Psalms 122:1 *[[A Song of degrees of David.]]* I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.