

## DAILY READING

### WEEK 11 THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY AND BEING REVIVED EVERY MORNING

#### WEEK 11 — DAY 1

#### Scripture Reading

Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart.

Rom 16:5 And greet the church, which is in their house.

#### THE MEETING PLACE

The thought of a church is so frequently associated with a church building, that the building itself is often referred to as “the church.” But in God’s Word it is the living believers who are called the church, not the bricks and mortar (see Acts 5:11; Matt. 18:17). According to Scripture it is not even necessary for a church to have a place definitely set apart for fellowship. The Jews always had their special meeting places, and wherever they went they made a point of building a synagogue in which to worship God. The first apostles were Jews, and the Jewish tendency to build special places of worship was natural to them. Had Christianity required that places be set apart for the specific purpose of worshipping the Lord, the early apostles, with their Jewish background and natural tendencies, would have been ready enough to build them. The amazing thing is that, not only did they not put up special buildings, but they seem to have ignored the whole subject intentionally. It is Judaism, not Christianity, which teaches that there must be sanctified places for divine worship. The temple of the New Testament is not a material edifice; it consists of living persons, all believers in the Lord. Because the New Testament temple is spiritual, the question of meeting places for believers, or places of worship, is one of minor importance. Let us turn to the New Testament and see how the question of meeting places is dealt with there.

When our Lord was on earth, He met with His disciples at times on the hillside and at times by the sea. He gathered them around Him now in a house, again in a boat, and there were times when He drew apart with them in an upper room. But there was no consecrated place, where He habitually met with His own. At Pentecost the disciples were gathered in an upper room, and after Pentecost they either met all together in the temple or separately in different houses (Acts 2:46), or at times in the portico of Solomon (Acts 5:12). They met for prayer in various homes, Mary’s being one of them (Acts 12:12), and we read that on a certain occasion they were assembled in a room on the third floor of a building (Acts 20:8). Judging from these passages, the believers assembled in a great variety of places and had no official meeting place. They simply made use of any building that suited their needs, whether a private home, or just a room in a house, or else a large public building such as the temple, or even a wide space like the portico of Solomon. They had no buildings specially set apart for church use; they had nothing which would correspond to the “church” of today.

“And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread, Paul conversed with them....And there were a considerable number of lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. And a certain young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window”

(Acts 20:7-9). In Troas we find the believers meeting in the third story of a building. There is a delightfully unofficial air about this gathering, such a contrast to the present-day conventional services, with the church members all sitting stiffly in their pews. But this Troas meeting was a truly scriptural one. There was no official stamp upon it; it bore the marks of real life, in its perfect naturalness and pure simplicity. It was quite all right for some of the saints to sit on the window-ledge, or for others to sit on the floor, as Mary did of old. In our assemblies we must return to the principle of the upper room. The ground floor is a place for business, a place for men to come and go; but there is more of a home atmosphere about the upper room, and the gatherings of God's children are family affairs. The last supper was in an upper room; so was Pentecost, and so again was the meeting here. God wants the intimacy of the upper room to mark the gatherings of His children, not the stiff formality of an imposing public edifice.

That is why in the Word of God we find His children meeting in the family atmosphere of a private home. We read of the church in the house of Prisca and Aquila (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19), the church in the house of Nymphas (Col. 4:15), and the church in the house of Philemon (Philem. 2). The New Testament mentions at least these three different churches that were in the homes of believers. How did churches come to be in such homes? If in a certain place there were a few believers, and one of them had a house large enough to accommodate them all, they quite naturally assembled there, and the Christians in that locality were called "the church in the house of So-and-so."—Normal Christian Church Life, chapter 9.