

House Churches

Two Major Assertions

1. We should take Lord's supper with (or as) common meal.
2. 'House churches'
 - a. leave larger congregations, meet in houses, ~three to four families
 - b. remain at large / larger congregations on Sunday morning, meet in 'house churches' Sunday night

I. Short Review Of 'Proof'

Bases entire premise on assumptions

- What *may* be may also *not* be
- “...there seems to be little question but that first-century Christians met together in small groups as house churches. Historically, of course, we know that it was not until the third century that Christians began to erect what we today would recognize as church buildings.”
 - Jn.4:20-24, place does not matter
 - Ac.2 ... 19 ... 20 ... 1 Co.11

Misuse of Scripture

- ‘...their apparent practice of worshiping together in private homes, presumably in relatively small groups. Ac.8:3. Of course, this might have taken place during the week in the homes of various disciples...”
 - Amazing. Ac.8:3 is not ‘house churches’ but individual Christians in homes
 - Ac.2:46 contrasts Temple worship with eating food in homes
 - 1 Co.14:23

Misuse of Scripture

- Acts 20:20 – “Paul might have been referring to times of private study with individual families in their own homes; or, equally possible, to his meetings with various house churches throughout Ephesus.”
 - Assumes point he wants to prove.
 - NT does not authorize dividing a church into small churches [churches of a church]

Agenda driven

- Jesus taught in private houses.
 - Also in a boat
 - On a mountain
 - In synagogues
 - “Where” is immaterial

Agenda driven

- Spontaneity and 'each' (1 Co.14:26)
 - But 14:27, 29 – limited
 - 1 Co.12:7, not spontaneous
 - 1 Co.14:40

Agenda driven

- “When is there ever time set aside in our assemblies, not for ‘scheduled’ prayers, but for *prayer*? (That is, for prayers to be lifted up by whatever brother feels moved to do so.”)
 - 1 Co.14:40

Agenda driven

- “The primary difference between the first century and the twenty-first century is that – apart from times when sermons were being preached – there seems not to have been ‘an audience’ as we know it today. When does a home ever have an audience?”
 - Mk.2
 - Cf. Ac.20:7...20

Agenda driven

- “‘Acts of worship’ – as practiced among us today – are mostly an orchestrated religious spectacle for which we have reserved seats each week.”)
 - Bald assertion; insulting; disrespectful
- “In effect, it’s the *clergy* and the *laity*.”
 - Inconsistent

1 Co.16:1-4 (1/2)

- “there is simply no evidence that the early church ever made weekly contributions as part of an apostolically-mandated worship ritual. Their contributions, when made, were special collections intended to meet particular needs... If Paul’s instructions about weekly contributions are to be regarded as a ‘command’ for us today, consistency demands that we hold our funds until Paul himself comes and delivers them to Jerusalem”

1 Co.16:1-4 (2/2)

- Position explains away entire NT
- Also explains away 'special collections' – Paul died.
 - Mk.14
 - Ac.8
 - 1 Co.16, pattern for raising funds (where is another?)
 - One example for its use (benevolence)
 - Other examples: evangelism (2 Co.11)

Invitation and song

- “There was an intimacy that would have made standing up and singing an invitation song a complete nonsense”
 - Ac.5
 - Ac.8
 - Ga.2
 - Ja.5:16

I. Short Review Of Proof

II. A 'House Church'
Passage – Romans 16

Ro.16:3-5

- Church meeting in house is bound by same teaching as all others:

WORK

AUTONOMY

OVERSIGHT

- Ro.1:7 – ‘saints in Rome’

Ro.16:3-5

Ro.16:14a

- May refer to another congregation in Rome
- Unlike Corinth, no place large enough for all Christians? (1 Co.14:23)

Ro.16:3-5

Ro.16:14a

Ro.16:15b

- Greet Christians . . . ‘and all the saints who are with them’
 - House church advocates assume one church in Rome, composed of several house churches.
 - Ac.2, Temple church? Ac.19, School...? Ac.20, Upper room...?
 - Ro.16 gives example of more than one autonomous church in a city

I. Short Review Of Proof

II. A 'House Church' Passage – Romans 16

III. Other Problems With
House Church Fad

House Church plan makes number of churches within a church

- NT: elders (plural) oversee entire church (singular). Ac.20; 1 Pt.5
- 1 Co.11:17, church came together for L.S., ate common meals at home (22, 34).

Why not say, 'You have your own houses to eat Lord's Supper in'?

In home setting, "hearts are opened"

- Ac.16:14
- Spirituality does not come from mere mechanics (spontaneous singing, chain prayers)
- Root of problem is internal and spiritual, not external and mechanical

Substitutes feelings for edification

- An enthusiasm not based on gospel, but on feelings they get from being in a small group

'If pressed on the issue (which, so far, I've managed to side-step) I don't know that I'm prepared to say unequivocally that the house church was a divinely-intended arrangement. Not in the sense, at least, that it plainly violates God's will if we meet, instead, in purpose-built houses of worship ... However, I have no doubt but that moving away from the house-church concept has given rise to a system without scriptural support which has fundamentally changed the form and nature of worship as practiced in the apostolic church'

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