

WHEN IS THE LORD IN OUR MIDST?

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When we live as the Lord requires, doing those things pleasing in his sight, having an attitude and disposition that is like His, He is in our midst. Notice the Lord's words of Matthew 18:20, "...where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This verse shows that when we stand together in doing the Lord's will, He is with us. He is in our midst. We are one with Him.

The application often made of this verse is that as long as two or more come together to worship, that constitutes the church and the Lord is in their midst. As a result, they feel comfortable going to the lake for a weekend or a sporting event like a race or game. They excuse themselves to do whatever they want to do as long as they have a "prayer" and take the "Lord's supper." Consequently, they forsake the assembling of the saints on the Lord's day (Heb. 10:25). This is a misapplication of the verse.

Matthew 18:20 not only involves the assembling of the church, it includes the fact that when we do the Lord's will, following His word, then He is with us. He is in our midst. We have fellowship one with another and with Him (1 John 1:5-10).

Both Old and New Testaments show that the Lord is with His people — His church. He is in our midst. Psalm 22:22 is quoted in Hebrews 2:12: "*Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*"

In Revelation 1:13, John saw "...in the *midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*" This is an obvious reference to the Lord Jesus. Seven verses later in verse 20, it is revealed that the seven *candlesticks* are the seven *churches*. The point is clear, Jesus is in the midst of faithful congregations, not just when they assemble, but when they act in following His divine will.

The seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 & 3 serve as an example (both good and bad) for us today. The obvious point made in these two chapters is that the Lord walked in the midst of these churches. He did so to govern, to watch and to rule over them. Verse one of chapter two says he "*walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*" (cf. Rev. 1:13). Five of the seven congregations are given stern warning that unless they repent, their candlestick would be removed (2:5). They would no longer be a light bearer. They would cease to be a shining example. The Lord would depart from them. He would abandon them to their own selfishness and conceit. If they would not listen and take heed, there would be no reward.

When is Jesus in our midst? When does he promise to be with us? When are we assured He is there? **It is when we do his will.** If we are servants of God, faithful and true, the Lord is with us.

In the great commission, Jesus said, "Go

ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, *I am with you alway*, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19-20). But, if we are not faithful, if we hold ill-will toward others, if our heart is not right, if our conduct is shameful, we cannot expect the Lord to stand with us. Such a life is repulsive to the Lord. He does not promise to be with us.

Instead, He promises to take vengeance against us at the last day (2 Thess. 1:8).

Having the Lord’s favor and approval is needed above all else. He is the judge (John 12:48). If we desire and expect to go to heaven, there’s only one way to get there; and, that is to do his will. Jesus said, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*” (Luke 6:46)? “*If ye love me, keep my commandments*” (John 14:15). “*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*” (John 15:14).
