

ASSEMBLING TOGETHER

by Robert Beecham

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching." (Heb 10: 25).

From time to time, well-meaning friends have reminded us of this verse in Hebrews, fearing that we might be ignoring it. Where and when should we assemble? In the old days the answer was pretty obvious: 11 a.m. on Sunday at the local church building. All we had to do was to turn up, and as long as a few other people did the same, there was an assembly. We were obeying Hebrews 10:25, or so we thought. The only problem we encountered (and it was a serious one) was whether Jesus was the focus of the gathering. Sometimes He was. Other times we ignored Him and did our own 'thing' (not realizing it, of course).

The Greek word for assembling in this verse is *episynagoge* from the verb *epi-syn-ago*, meaning to assemble. This word has 3 parts: *ago* means *to lead*; *syn* means *together*; *epi* means *at or to*. *Synago* (the root of synagogue) means *to lead or gather together*. The word for assembling (*epi-syn-agoge*), therefore, means *gathering together at (or) to* . . .

That's fine, but it doesn't say where or when. To find out where, we need to turn to 2 Thes 2:1 *"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the presence (or coming) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together to Him."* We have the same word *episynagoge*, but this time it does tell us where: we gather together to Him because **Jesus is the meeting place (who dwells within us)**.

When we 'go to church', we meet the other people who 'go to church.' When we go to Jesus, we meet the other people who go to Jesus. Of course, this agrees with what Jesus Himself said: "Come to Me" not "Go to church". He also said, *"where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* **He is the meeting place.**

Now a parable: Once I saw a circle with myself and others on the circumference. I wanted to get closer to my brothers and

sisters, and so I moved round the circumference in one direction. But as I got closer to some I got further away from others. When I reversed my direction, it was no better. Again I got closer to some, but further away from others.

So I gave up, and stopped trying to get closer to my brothers and sisters, and instead moved towards the center of the circle, and others did the same. And what do you think happened? We all got closer to each other. And who do you think was at the center of the circle? The same One who said, "Come to Me."