

USE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING

The apostolic church enjoyed common meals together, called “love feasts” (1 Pet. 2:13; Jude 12). Historians indicate that these meals took place immediately before or after worship and at the place of worship (as with our “fellowship meals”). With the advance of apostasy following the apostolic period, the concept of the sacredness of the church building evolved. By A.D. 397, the Council of Laodicea handed down a “church law” forbidding any to eat or spread tables “in the house of God” (i.e., the church building). Those today who oppose eating in the church building are not imitating the **apostolic** church, but the **apostate** church.

Those who hold such a view commit at least two faults: (1) They view the building rather than the people as the church, and (2) they make a law where God has not made one. The first of these may be due to ignorance of what the church really is. The second often arises from a brazen attempt to usurp the dominion of the Lord and to bind their private scruples on all others. Whether or not by intent, such folk are themselves governed and they seek to govern others by the traditions of men rather than by the Word of God, which the Lord clearly condemned (Mat. 15:6–9).

God does not live in any kind of building, including a church building: “The most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands” (Acts 7:48; 17:24). To eat food in a church building does not desecrate it; it is not God’s temple to begin with. We, God’s people, are the temple, the dwelling place, of God (1 Cor. 3:16–17; 6:19–20). To misuse the body and its abilities is to desecrate God’s temple (Luke 10:27; Rom. 12:1–3).

Does not Paul’s order that if one is hungry he should “eat at home” (1 Cor. 11:22, 34) forbid eating in the church building? If so, it would mean that Prisca and Acquila (Rom. 16:3–5) and others in whose homes the church met would have been both

commanded and **forbidden** to eat in their homes. If we ignore the actual context and purpose of the passage, we are forbidden to eat anywhere besides our own homes. Further, Paul included **drinking** as well as **eating** (1 Cor. 11:22). Strangely, the church buildings of those who object to **eating** in the building almost always have a water fountain. Yet, it is clear that “eating and drinking” stand or fall together.

An honest consideration of the context reveals that Paul is not addressing the right or wrong use of the Lord’s **building**, but of the Lord’s **supper** (vv. 17–29). He directed his rebuke at the practice of making the Lord’s supper into a gluttonous physical meal, which is what we would have to do in order to duplicate the abuse Paul addressed. It is no more sinful to eat in a church building than it is to drink in a church building.

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