

HOW THE CHURCH IS TO GET ITS MONEY

AND

HOW THE CHURCH IS TO SPEND ITS MONEY

This subject has a great bearing on the present-day issues facing the church. If these questions can be solved, we will be a long way down the road to solving the problems of institutionalism, the sponsoring church and church-sponsored recreation. I believe that all who will accept the New Testament as their complete authority in religion can find the answer to these two "hows". Let us now set ourselves to that task.

HOW THE LOCAL CHURCH IS TO GET ITS MONEY

There are only two ways a local congregation can receive money into its treasury with divine authority: (1) The local church is to receive money into its treasury on a weekly basis by individual members giving a portion of their earnings on the first day of the week (I Cor. 16: 1 - 2); (2) A local congregation can also receive money into its treasury from another congregation in time of want (or need) (Acts 11: 27 - 30; II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9). When one church gave to another church in New Testament times it was always a case of want -- the receiving church being unable to do its own work. No church in New Testament times contributed to another church to promote and carry on a "good work" that both churches had an equal relation to.

The local church is without Bible authority to receive money into its treasury by entering into business enterprise. In New Testament times that which the local church received required no intermediate transaction by the church before it could be used for the work of the church. Members of the Jerusalem church sold their possessions and then gave the money (Acts 2:45; 4: 34 - 37; Acts 5: 1 - 2). They did not give land or houses and then let the church sell them, which would have demanded intermediate action on the part of the church before the value could be used in the work of the Lord. From these examples we learn that the individual entered into the business transaction, this kept the local church out of business (but, today we find that these Bible truths mean nothing to some churches of Christ; they enter business enterprise to make money to finance the work of the church!). In the New Testament we find that the money-maker and the one who entered into business was the individual Christian (Eph. 4:28; I Tim. 5:8; I Thess. 4: 11 - 12; II Thess. 3: 10 - 13; Rom. 12:11; Acts 20: 34 - 35; Titus 3:14). It is from his giving a portion of his earnings that the expenses of the kingdom are defrayed (I Cor. 16: 1 - 2).

HOW THE LOCAL CHURCH IS TO SPEND ITS MONEY

The spending of the money that is put into the church treasury (I Cor. 16: 1 - 2) is under divine authority. We are told that the money given by the disciples of the Lord (recorded in the first chapters of the book of Acts) was put under "the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:35 - 37; 5:2)-- an expression meaning that it was put under their authority. (A like expression is found concerning Christ's authority over the church in Eph. 1:22). We find that by the authority of Christ the apostles had binding and loosing authority (Matt. 16:19; 18:18); so, we learn that money given by disciples of the Lord into the common treasury of the church is under apostolic authority (or the authority of

Christ) and is not to be spent just any way some elders may decide they want to spend it. The apostles bound three things for which the church can spend its money: (1) evangelism -- I Tim. 3:15; I Thess. 1:8; Phil. 1:5; 4: 14 - 17; I Cor. 9:14; (2) edification -- Eph. 4: 11 - 16; and (3) benevolence -- Acts 2: 45; 4: 32 - 34; 6: 1 - 6; 11: 27 - 30; I Cor. 16: 1 - 2; II Cor. 8 and 9; Rom. 15: 25 - 26. Therefore, the church can spend money for things needed in carrying out these three works. Some examples of things needed to expedite these works are a meeting house, class rooms, study books, song books, a house for the preacher to live in, food and shelter for the needy, just to name a few.

An eldership cannot spend the Lord's money for a skating party, hayride, or a recreation room because none of these come under the three works listed above -- evangelism, edification or benevolence. This is not part of the work of the church by apostolic authority.

We learn in the fifth chapter of the book of Acts that there is a difference between the money in one's own pocket and the money "under the apostles' feet". Acts 5 teaches that money in one's own pocket is his "own" and under his own power or authority. Money put into the common treasury is under the "apostles' feet", or under the authority of Christ, and is no longer under our own power. So, there is a difference between my money and the Lord's money in the common treasury of the church.

Brethren, these elementary Bible truths will go a long way in solving some of our problems.

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