

LOCAL CHURCH BENEVOLENCE: WHO RELIEVED WHOM?

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This is a simple test on local church benevolence, i.e., its work of charity, of providing relief for the needy; of providing the necessities of life to those who are unable to supply their own needs.
2. The procedure we shall follow is to ask a series of questions based on a series of N.T. passages, each of which deals with the local church and its work of benevolence from its treasury.
3. Each question based on each passage will have two parts, the answer to which can easily be learned from a simply reading of the passage cited.
4. Two important lessons will be learned in this study.
 - a. We will learn **TO WHOM** local church benevolent aid or relief was given in N.T. times.
 - b. We will learn **WHAT ORGANIZATION** was used in the distribution of the aid or the relief.
5. As we take this test keep in mind that we are:
 - a. To respect and obey divine authority, Mt.17:5; Col.3:17; Heb.5:8,9; Lk.6:46.
 - b. Not to add to, take from or substitute for what is written, 1Cor.4:6; Rev.22:18,19.
 - c. To “speak as the oracles of God,” 1Pet.4:11.
 - d. To “speak where the Bible speaks; be silent where the Bible is silent; do Bible things in Bible ways; call Bible things by Bible names.” As an example consider:
 - (1) When the Lord’s Supper is to be observed, Ac.20:7.
 - (2) The kind of music authorized in worship, Eph.5:19; Col.3:16.
 - (3) How many elders are to oversee each local church, Ac.14:23; Tit.1:5.
 - e. Considering the work and the action of the local church in its benevolent work from its treasury, or the collective action of saints in their local church capacity.
 - f. Not considering the individual action of the individual Christian separate and apart from local church action.
6. Now let us see what the Bible says in answer to our question: Who Relieved Whom?

II. DISCUSSION

A. ACTS 2:44,45

1. Who was relieved or had their physical needs supplied?
 - a. Saints? (Members of the church?)
 - b. Aliens (non-members)?
2. Who (what organization) did the relieving or the supplying of the need?
 - a. The local church in its local capacity?
 - b. Sponsoring church (church standing between the giving church and the one receiving the relief)/
 - c. A Benevolent Society? Or a Benevolent Association?

B. ACTS 4:32-35

1. Who was relieved?
 - a. Saints (members of the church)?
 - b. Aliens (non-members)?
2. Who (what organization) did the relieving?
 - a. The local church in its local capacity?
 - b. A Sponsoring church?
 - c. A Benevolent Society? Or a Benevolent Association?

C. ACTS 6:1-6

1. Who was relieved?
 - a. Widows who were saints (members of the church)?
 - b. Widows who were aliens (non-members)?
2. Who (what organization) did the relieving?
 - a. The local church in its local capacity?
 - b. A Sponsoring church?
 - c. A Benevolent Society? Or a Benevolent Association?

D. ACTS 11:27-30

1. Who was relieved?
 - a. Saints (members of the church)?
 - b. Aliens (non-members)?
2. Who (what organization) did the relieving?
 - a. The local church in its local capacity?
 - b. A Sponsoring church?
 - c. A Benevolent Society? Or a Benevolent Association?

E. ROM. 15:25-31

1. Who was relieved?
 - a. Saints (members of the church)?
 - b. Aliens (non-members)?
2. Who (what organization) did the relieving?
 - a. The local church or local churches in local capacity?

- b. A Sponsoring church?
- c. A Benevolent Society? Or a Benevolent Association?

F. 1 COR.16:1-3

1. Who was relieved?
 - a. Saints (members of the church)?
 - b. Aliens (non-members)?
2. Who (what organization) did the relieving?
 - a. Local church or local churches in local capacity?
 - b. A Sponsoring church?
 - c. A Benevolent Society? Or a Benevolent Association?

G. 2 COR.8:1-5

1. Who was relieved?
 - a. Saints (members of the church)?
 - b. Aliens (non-members)?
2. Who (what organization) did the relieving?
 - a. Local church or local churches in local capacity?
 - b. A Sponsoring church?
 - c. A Benevolent Society? Or a Benevolent Association?

H. 2 COR.9:1-5

1. Who was relieved?
 - a. Saints (members of the church)?
 - b. Aliens (non-members)?
2. Who (what organization) did the relieving?
 - a. Local church or local churches in local capacity?
 - b. A Sponsoring church?
 - c. A Benevolent Society? Or a Benevolent Association?

I. 1 TIM. 5:8-16

1. Who was to be relieved?
 - a. Saints (widows who were members of the church)?
 - b. Aliens (widows who were non-members)?
2. Who (what organization) was to do the relieving?
 - a. The local church in its local capacity?
 - b. A Sponsoring church?
 - c. A Benevolent Society? Or a Benevolent Association?
3. From this scripture, who can doubt there is a difference in the individual Christian and the local church, in individual action and collective action, in the individual's work and the local church's work?

III. CONCLUSION

1. From the Scriptures we cannot find where the local church in its work of benevolence or relief of the needy, and from its treasury, ever:
 - a. Contributed to or supplied the physical needs of aliens or non-members.
 - b. Built, organized, maintained, sponsored or contributed to a human institution or benevolent society or benevolent association.
2. The local church may buy the services of a human institution in order to its God-ordained work; but it has no divine authority to build, maintain, sponsor or contribute to one for that purpose. Ill. by examples.
3. Individual Christians may own, operate, build or maintain various human organizations, corporations, etc. for business purposes, but the local churches have no scriptural authority to do so, nor do they have the proper organization for doing so!
4. Remember: We must not go beyond that which is written, 1Cor.4:6; Cf. 2Jno.9.