

October 12, 2016

Question: Is it right to have more than one congregation in one location of not more than say ten square kilometers? People try to justify and promote division by applying the Jerusalem case during the first century when persecution scattered Christians to various places.

Answer: There is absolutely nothing in the New Testament to dictate the proximity of one congregation to another. Obviously, locations should be determined by things like ease and reasonableness of travel and population density. Jesus' prayer for His church was for unity (John 17:20, 21). Paul pleaded with the saints at Corinth to be united (1 Corinthians 1:10).

A new congregation should not be formed every time brethren have a difference over matters of opinion. Only when a congregation has completely apostatized would it be appropriate to form a new congregation where the truth is faithfully preached and practiced.

It should also be noted that there are no perfect congregations. A careful reading of Acts through Revelation will expose problems in nearly every congregation, but the call was not for division and the establishment of another congregation, but rather repentance and a return to a biblical framework for the church.

The case of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8) has no real bearing on the situation described. These were in all probability saints who had come to Jerusalem from all over the world to celebrate the Passover and had stayed until Pentecost and beyond (Acts 2). When the persecution arose in Jerusalem, they were compelled to scatter, but they took their new faith with them. This persecution worked providentially to spread the borders of the kingdom more quickly. The example of those saints should not be misappropriated to justify the division of the local church.