

Christian Greetings

The Biblical teaching of the exchange of Christian greetings is a common practice among Apostolic Christians. For outsiders attending a typical Sunday worship service, they will witness brotherly love in action. Brothers and sisters in Christ will greet each other with warm handshakes, a holy kiss, or both. The verbal greeting is a hearty “God Bless You.” Although local brothers may not always greet each other with the kiss at every service, visiting brothers from other congregations most often will. Sisters are much more apt to practice this greeting even on the local level.

In both cases, this greeting emanates from the love of Christ in our hearts, realizing we have a bond in Him that makes us one brotherhood. Believers coming from foreign countries, who do not even speak our language, will feel a spiritual unity through this greeting.

It is well to mention that the practice of the “holy kiss” is often replaced with what we might call the “holy hug.” Some believers are more comfortable with the hug. This type of expression does not necessarily indicate a lesser degree of charity: however, scripture really does encourage the greeting with a kiss.

The question that needs to be addressed is how do we greet those who are not members of our fellowship? Jesus addresses this when he states in Mat. 5:47, “And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?” It is important that if we want to win them to Christ and make them feel welcome, that we are considerate, show a genuine interest in them, and express verbally God’s blessing to them as well.

It might also be well to point out that the greeting of the holy kiss as generally practiced in our churches is a kiss on the cheek and not on lips lest someone might be offended when a brother or sister offers the cheek. The cheek kiss has and is still offered in mid-eastern culture and we can assume this is what the early church practiced, and was encouraged by the apostles. The apostle Paul states in Romans 16:16 “Salute one another with a holy kiss, the churches of Christ salute you.” Salute has a similar meaning as greet.

Some congregations encourage this beautiful greeting during communion service which is open to members of the church only. All brothers and sisters will greet each other within the same gender, brother to brother, and sister to sister. After sharing the bread and wine in remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary, this greeting makes for a special bond.

Another scriptural practice among Apostolic Christians is the exchange of church greetings from one church to another. This may seem astonishing that believers have so many ties from across the globe. Special occasions such as new church dedications or baptisms may bring many visitors from the US, Canada, and even foreign countries.

They come to partake of God's blessing through fellowship and worship and usually bring their church's greetings.

Some may argue that these practices are ACC traditions and are not needed in today's society. The answer is an emphatic "no." The practices are scriptural; God's word yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Godly greetings were practiced even before New Testament times. Boaz of Bethlehem greeted his workers in the field, "The Lord be with you" and they answered him with "The Lord bless thee." (Ruth 2:4). Joseph greeted his brother Benjamin "God be gracious unto thee my son." (Gen 43:29).

In the early church there are many examples where greetings were conveyed from brother to brother and church to church. The apostle Paul devotes almost all of Romans chapter 16 to send greetings to the church at Rome. He mentions many believers by name. He interchanges salute and greet; they have the same meaning.

The Apostle Paul himself experienced the heartfelt farewell greeting at Ephesus after his last visit to that church. Acts 20:36-37: "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him." (a holy kiss)

Another beautiful example of Christian greeting is found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. I Cor 16:19-20: "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss."

This teaching is not just Paulinian. The apostle Peter similarly wrote to the dispersed Christians in what today is Turkey and beyond. He encouraged those believers by letting them know other believers truly care about them. I Pet 5:13-14: "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus."

As we see from scripture, the practice of Christian greetings is a beautiful expression of the bond that exists among fellow believers in Christ Jesus.

May God's grace and peace be with us all to continue this biblical practice of Christian Greetings. To God be the glory for now and evermore.

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