It Is Written

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Grok on the Church

Recently, Michael Penton asked Grok (the AI search engine) the following question: "*Grok based only on the text you have in the NKJV of the Bible, what denomination of Christianity would you consider to follow the New Testament pattern of worship the closest assuming only one could be correct based on what Paul said in Corinthians when he said 'let there be no divisions among you'. Start with the name of the denomination.*"

The question is asked in such a way so as to not be leading (to suggest a particular church). We know that the Lord's church is not a denomination, but by using the word, his question made sure that Grok would examine all of the denominations. Grok's answer is below:

"*Churches of Christ.*

The New Testament (NKJV) presents a pattern of local autonomous congregations gathering on the first day of the week for mutual edification through teaching/preaching the word, prayer, the Lord's Supper (breaking of bread/cup), singing (psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in the heart), and a free-will contribution (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; 14:26; 16:1-2; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Leadership consists of elders (also called overseers/bishops) and deacons in each local church, with no hierarchical structure above the congregation (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). Baptism is immersion of penitent believers 'for the remission of sins' and entry into the body (Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21). Worship is to be done 'in spirit and truth' ordered and edifying, without the additions or traditions that later created party names and divisions (Jn. 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:26, 40). Paul's explicit command in 1 Corinthians 1:10 – 'that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment' – rules our competing denominational identities, creeds, or practices that go beyond or alter this pattern. The congregations that historically and intentionally limit themselves to the elements and structure described above (weekly Lord's Supper, a cappella congregational singing, immersion baptism for forgiveness, local eldership only, no extra-biblical hierarchy or instrumental accompaniment in the assembly) align most closely with that undivided New Testament order."

Beneath the Cross

By Matt Hennecke

Whenever we gather to partake of the Lord's Supper, we join in remembering something we didn't witness—Jesus's crucifixion. We attempt to somehow "see" what we didn't see. Is this even possible?

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he told his followers to eat in remembrance of him; but I wasn't at the cross and you weren't either, so how can we remember? And we're not the only ones who weren't there. Except for one, that ragtag group of apostles who had followed Jesus during his three-year ministry weren't there either.

You know who stood beneath the cross of Jesus when he was crucified? His mother. Why? One word: love. Hers was the undying devotion and amazing love of a mother. Despite the absolute horror she was about to witness, no one—neither the Jewish religious elite nor the Roman government—could have kept her from being at her son's side when the world was at its darkest. There's nothing in

this life more powerful than a mother's love. It is only eclipsed by God's love who sent his son to die on the very cross beneath which Mary stood.

The Bible records several other women were present, but where were all the men? Where were the apostles? They'd run. Matthew 26:56 says simply "…all…left him and fled." John—the one whom Jesus loved—also stood beneath the cross of Jesus. Apparently, he'd fled with the others; but love stopped his flight and, despite the danger, he returned to be with Jesus. Of the apostles, then, only one—John—saw Jesus crucified. The others had fled for their lives—the very lives Jesus was sent to save. Perhaps later, to their shame, when asked if they had seen the crucifixion of Jesus, they had to reply, "No, I wasn't there." When these ambassadors of Christ who preached the gospel throughout the known world joined with fellow Christians in taking the Lord's Supper, they likely felt pangs of guilt as they sought to remember something they had not seen.

So, again, the question: Can we remember what we've not witnessed? Can we "see" what we've not seen? Can we stand beneath the cross of Jesus and see him crucified? I think we can. I believe we are standing beneath the cross of Jesus when we assemble to partake of the Lord's Supper.

How can I say this? Because faith is all about "seeing" what we haven't seen. Hebrews 1:1 says, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." A bit later in the chapter—in verse 27—the writer describes faith somewhat differently. He says faith is "seeing the unseen."

Elizabeth Clephane—a young Scottish poetess—wrote the lyrics to a hymn we occasionally sing. Sadly, she died at the young age of 39, long before her work was published. One of her poems put to music is entitled "Beneath the Cross." Elizabeth believed we could "see the unseen" and she believed—despite not having been there—that we could stand and take a stand—even today—beneath the cross of Jesus.

"Behold, I Thought"

By David A. Cox

Naaman came to Elisha with a serious problem—he was a leper. He wanted to be cleansed, but when God's prophet told him to "Go and wash in Jordan seven times" (II Kings 5:10), Naaman became angry.

His response revealed the problem: "Behold, I thought…" Naaman had already decided how he believed his cleansing should take place. He expected Elisha to come out, call upon God, and perform some dramatic act. He even questioned why the rivers of Damascus were not better than the Jordan.

Naaman wanted the blessing, but he questioned God's instructions. His servants wisely reasoned with him, and Naaman finally humbled himself. He went down to the Jordan and dipped seven times "according to the saying of the man of God" (II Kings 5:14). Then he was cleansed. The power was not in the Jordan River. The power was with God. Naaman had to trust God enough to do what He commanded.

We may not always understand why God commands what He does. Another way makes more sense to us. But genuine faith trusts God even when we do not understand everything.

Faith trusts God enough to do what He says. Naaman's cleansing came when he stopped relying upon "I thought" and submitted to what God said.