

## **The Jerusalem Church**

No. 129

### **Introduction.**

- I. More than 1900 years ago Christ's church was established in the city of Jerusalem. When Peter had convinced the Jews that they had crucified the Messiah, they were pierced in heart. (Acts 2:37, 38).
  - A. Luke states 3,000 souls were baptized that day. (Acts 2:41).
  - B. The baptism of these 3,000 marked the beginning of the church in Jerusalem and in the world.
- II. Today let's study some of the outstanding characteristics of this first church. It is a model church for all generations to come.
  - A. Listen carefully to the description we have of this church in the holy scriptures.

**ACT 2:42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.**

**ACT 4:32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. 34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, 35 and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need. 36 And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement), 37 and who owned a tract of land,**

**sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.**

**ACT 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.**

**ACT 8:1 And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. ¶ And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. 4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.**

B. From these passages we can see that a number of great things stand out about the Jerusalem church.

I. **Loyal Church** - One outstanding characteristic of the Jerusalem church was its loyalty to Christ.

- The scriptures state they were steadfast or devoted to the apostles' teaching. What did the apostles teach? Matt. 15:9; 7:15; 7:21; Jn. 5:30; 14:26.
- The apostles taught only the words of Christ. The first Christians did not follow their own ideas or what was popular in their day. They obeyed the words of the apostles, that is, of Jesus.

A. The Jerusalem church demonstrated their devotion to the Lord by being **faithful to the assembly**.

1. These Christians did not just attend the assembly on the Lord's day. They worshiped God every day of the week.
2. **They did not need the warning of the Hebrew writer.** (Heb. 10:25).
3. These brethren were faithful to the assembly because of their love for God and because of their concern for themselves. They knew staying away from the services of the church causes one's faith to grow cold.
4. **One time a preacher called on a member who habitually missed church services.** The man and his family were gathered around the fire place. The preacher silently lifted a large coal out of the fire place and laid it by itself on the hearth. They all quietly looked at the coal as it became lukewarm and then became cold and dead. The man looked at the preacher and said, "You need not say a word. I see the point. I'll be there next Sunday." You take away a Christian from the encouragement of the assembly and it will not be long before his fire will become lukewarm and then cold.

B. The Jerusalem church also manifested its devotion by the **tremendous zeal it had for the cause of Christ**.

1. Every day in the temple and at home they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus as the Christ. They felt a responsibility to teach others about the Savior. They knew until they made an all out effort to teach others that they would not be free from the blood of men. They know until they made an all effort to teach others they would not know the sweet salvation in Jesus.
2. Today, we should follow the example of these brethren. Each Christian, regardless of his ability. should

do his utmost to tell others about Christ.

3. An unknown author has written,

“If you cannot sing like angels,  
If you cannot preach like Paul,  
You can tell the story of Jesus;  
You can say He died for all.

4. Years ago a **girl went from New Zealand** to England to study and there became a Christian. Immediately she became concerned for her unsaved loved ones. When she graduated, friends said to her, “You have made many friends in England, and are now accustomed to our way of life. Why do you wish to go back to New Zealand?” The girl replied, “Here I became a Christian. Do you think I could be contented not to go and tell my father and mother how they may experience the joy of salvation and have eternal life through faith in Christ? I must return to New Zealand and do my best to bring them to the Savior. I will go if have to swim to get there.” This should be the attitude of every Christian. He should have a burning desire to lead others to the Savior and even be willing to swim the ocean to reach the lost.

C. The Jerusalem church manifested its devotion by its **steadfastness under persecution**. Many of them were either killed or committed to prison because of their faith in Jesus. This persecution did not shake their faith. They remained steadfast to the Lord.

II. **Fellowship With One Another** - A second great thing about the Jerusalem church was its devotion to fellowship.

A. They demonstrated fellowship by their willingness to **share their possessions with one another**.

1. Those who had possessions sold them and gave the money they received for the possessions to the apostles. This money was then distributed to each as he had need.
2. This sacrifice was not compulsory. It was done of the great love they had for one another.

B. They demonstrated fellowship by the fact these **Christians wanted to get together**.

1. The Scriptures state they were getting together in one another’s homes. This fellowship was a sign of their love.

2. **All of us desire to be with people we truly love.**

a. The fact it is difficult to get Christians to be together in the church today is a sign that love does not exist as it should.

b. **One time a person spoke on the theme**, “Will we know one another in heaven?” Following services one of the members said, “I don’t know how we could know one another in heaven when we don’t even know one another here.”

c. **This is a sad commentary on the church in recent years**. Christians have become so busy that they do not have time to have fellowship with one another. Brethren, we need to have more fellowship. Fellowship is a sign our love for one another. It is also vital to our spiritual well-being. Without it, it is so easy to drift away from the Lord.

III. **Lord's Supper** - A third outstanding characteristic of this church was its devotion to the Lord's Supper.

- A. They were faithful to assemble on the Lord's day and partake of the Lord's Supper. (Acts 2:42).
- B. The Lord's Supper was not a mere ritual of eating and drinking, but it was a feast with rich meaning. They assembled to remember the Lord's suffering and death and His resurrection.
- C. **The church today should partake of the Lord's Supper each Sunday.** It is a time to remember the Lord's death and resurrection. It is a time to remember that Jesus is coming again. Each of us should reverently partake of the Supper each week.

IV. **Praying Church** - A fourth characteristic of the Jerusalem church was the fact it was a praying church.

- A. The early church strongly believed in the power of prayer. They had not been brain washed into believing that prayer goes no higher than the ceiling.
- B. The church today needs to pray more. Prayer can do great things.
  - 1. Once there was **an elderly Christian lady who believed deeply in the power of prayer** who rented part of an infidel's house. One day he heard the poor lady pray loudly for her needs and he said to himself, "I'll show this foolish old lady up, and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, that her God is less than nothing, and only man can help out." So he left his eavesdropping position and went to the grocery store. He said, "Give me a loaf of bread, you'd laugh if you knew what for." So he went back home with a chuckle as he thought of the good time he was going to have for only a dime. On reaching his house he climbed to the roof, and through the fireplace flue, heard the lady praying to God. The infidel laughed as he leaned over the flue and let the loaf fall down at her feet. He then listened and heard the lady thank God for supplying her needs. With a sneer on his face he climbed to the ground and went around to her door. Now he was going to wreck her faith and have a good laugh. He knocked and the lady invited him inside. The man said, "You poor, foolish thing, to really believe that God hears and answers prayers. Why, I'm the one who brought you that loaf. I just dropped it down the fireplace!" The little old lady, who had not been deceived, cried out, "Well, praise the Lord! He answered my prayer, and gave me a loaf, if it were by the devil He sent it."
  - 2. God will answer our prayers even if He must sometimes send it by the devil! (Jas. 5:16; 1 Pet. 3:12).
  - 3. Prayer has **great power**. It will bless our individual lives. It will bless our homes. It will bless the church here and everywhere. It will bless the world.

V. **United Church** - Another great characteristic of this first church was it was a united church.

***"The multitude of them who believed were of one heart and soul."*** (Acts 4:32).

- A. The prayer of Jesus was imbedded deep in their hearts. (Jn. 17:20-21).
- B. Brethren, today we need the unity that existed among these brethren.
  - 1. We can have unity by following the apostles' teachings.
  - 2. We need to memorize this prayer of Jesus and pray for those things that make for peace.
  - 3. A good way to have this peace is to keep the church at work. A church that is working does not have the desire or time to fuss and fight.

**Conclusion.**

- I. A final great characteristic of the Jerusalem church was the fact it's members were saved. Upon being baptized, they had their sins washed away.
- II. You also can be saved be being buried with the Lord in baptism "for the forgiveness of sins." Will you obey the Lord? He is inviting you to come.
- III. Will you come to Jesus now as we stand and sing?

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