

# “The Church in Jerusalem!”

*Acts 2:36-47*

**Intro.** – A church newsletter carried an article about a man who visited eighteen different churches on successive Sundays. This man was trying to find out what the churches were really like. “I sat near the front. After worship time was over, I walked slowly to the rear, then returned to the front and went back to the foyer using another aisle. I smiled and was neatly dressed. I asked one person to direct me to a specific place: the restrooms, preacher’s study etc. I used the following scale to rate the reception I received, I awarded points on the following scale:

- 10 for a smile from a worshiper
- 10 for a greeting from someone sitting nearby
- 100 for an exchange of names
- 200 for an invitation to have coffee &/or refreshments
- 200 for an invitation to return the following Sunday
- 1000 for an introduction to another worshiper
- 2000 for an invitation to meet their preacher

On this scale, eleven of the eighteen churches earned fewer than 100 points. Five actually received less than 20 points. The conclusion: The doctrine may be Biblical, the singing inspirational, the sermon uplifting, but when a visitor finds nobody who cares whether they are here or not, they are not likely to come back.”

How do you think the first Church did in welcoming newcomers? Acts chapter 2 is all about the beginning of the first Church on the day of Pentecost. As we continue our study of the book of Acts, it is significant to note the Lord’s Church had a steadfast beginning in the city of Jerusalem. It was the Lord’s Church and it set the standard upon which this church and every other faithful church ought to set its goals.

It is sad to say, but true that a faithful church of our Lord no longer exists in Jerusalem. Why is that? It became a *society* rather than *the called out ones* of God’s faithful servants. Let me illustrate what I mean:

“I was naked and you questioned my lack of modesty in my appearance. I was imprisoned and you debated the legal aspects of interference. I was penniless, and you discussed tax-deductible donations from your wealth. I was sick and you thanked the Lord for the blessings of your health. I was hungry, and you formed a club to study malnutrition. I was homeless you told me God’s love was a shelter under any condition. I was lonely and you left me by myself while you, your family and friends congregated together. You seem so holy and so close to God; yet, I’m still sick, alone and afraid.”

**Purpose:** *to get a thorough understanding of the Church in Jerusalem*

- 1) this was the first church in the world!
- 2) this church was under the personal guidance of the Apostles (who were under the guidance of the H.S.
- 3) It was a most unique church... in its unity/giving... in its problems and solutions to these problems... in its pattern of faith and worship...

## **I The ORIGIN of the Church**

- quick overview of chapter one leading into chapter two of Acts
- A. The day of Pentecost – fifty days after the Passover
  1. One of the great feast days of Israel.
  2. They gathered together in celebration... and because their Lord told them to WAIT...
  3. They were clothed with power from on high...
- B. The Message of Peter
  1. Preached the first Gospel Message...
  2. Reproof and instructions were given...
- C. The Results of Peter’s Message
  1. Question was asked... the answer was given... resulting in 3,000 being added...

## II The TERMS of Membership

- looking now at how one became a part of the church in Jerusalem:
- A. Those Who Were Being SAVED
  1. Same terms as becoming a Christian... saved BY Grace, THROUGH Faith, AT Baptism, FOR good works...
  2. With these understood, infant membership wasn't/couldn't been practice of Jerusalem church!
- B. The Lord ADDED Those Being Saved
  1. Only those who were "*being saved*" = conversion is a process...
  2. No "open membership" – enter on HIS terms not man made terms...

## III The WORSHIP of the Church (2:42)

- A. The Apostles' Doctrine
  1. The whole of Christ's message and His salvation...
  2. Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
- B. In Fellowship
  1. Idea of sharing in common – a common relationship with God and each other...
  2. A common purpose... time, talents and moneys being good stewards...
  3. Common effort toward that purpose... live for Him Who died for all...
- C. The Breaking of Bread
  1. Symbolic feast...
  2. Memorial feast... how Jesus asked us to remember and show His death till He comes.
  3. Proclamation feast – we are His waiting and watching for His return...
- D. In Prayer
  1. Adoration... praise, thanksgiving and more praise
  2. Petition...
  3. Intercession... for others and their needs...

## IV The CONGREGATIONAL Life

- A. Rapid Growth
  1. First day membership = 3,000 plus
  2. Acts 4:4 – 5,000 men
  3. Acts 5:14 – "...*constantly being added*..."
- B. Marvelous Unity – Acts 4:32
  1. One Heart and Soul...
  2. Common property... had own property but they chose to help those in need...
- C. Aggressive Under Persecution
  1. Peter and John – Acts 4 they were threatened and released... Acts 4:18-21
  2. Apostles are imprisoned – Acts 5... Acts 5:29 "*...ought to obey God rather than man...*"
  3. Saul persecuted the Church – Acts 8:1,4 = Jerusalem church scattered.

## V The EARLY Problems

- first Church like any church today wasn't without its challenges
- A. Hypocrisy – Acts 5:1-11
  - great fear resulted from the death of these who were acting on their own gain...
- B. Daily Workings – Acts 6

- Hellenistic Jews complaining that their widows weren't receiving the attention they thought they should be getting...

C. Theological Problems – Acts 15

- Jerusalem had a conference where the great debate was over circumcision being necessary for one to be a member of the body of Christ, the Church...

Other difficulties were present as well, the point is the early church had problems too. How they handled them should be the point of interest we should have.

**Conclusion:** The characteristics of the Jerusalem church could be amplified upon by looking at such things as their loyalty, zeal, physical/moral courage, and their understanding of the urgency in proclaiming the message of Christ. We could continue this list; however, we know enough to make the necessary application. In this message we have been looking at the history of the first Church. It was located in Jerusalem, the location of the first Gospel message given by Peter on the day of Pentecost. Its terms of membership were the same terms Peter gave in reply to the people on that day. Their worship pattern left us with just that and we find a great example of congregational life in this the first church. Finally, our last application hinges on this. How do we know the true church when we see it? Or can we recognize the true church? May we always look to the example of the first church, the church in Jerusalem to answer these questions!