

INTRODUCTION

You notice that I am taking a break from our exposition of 1 John. I do intend for us to return to 1 John a few weeks from now. The reason I have diverted to Acts chapter 1 is that I could not keep up producing a new 1 John sermon each week during a particularly busy time these past few weeks and the next few. So I am bringing out for you these studies in Acts that I worked on with the church seven years ago. I trust these messages are helpful to the church, and I think the break from the intensity of the 1 John material is good for us, too.

All around us today are numerous models for how a church should be, what it should do, how the members should act, what should be done in worship, how the church should be grown. We pick up on these models from our previous church experiences, from popular books written by pastors of large churches, from what our friends and relatives tell us about their churches.

But, of course, when you think about it, we really want to have this church follow the model our Lord Jesus has laid down in the bible. We are His disciples, and our deepest desire is to do as He commands, out of our overflowing love toward Him who died for us.

So, today, let us look in the window of the church in Jerusalem just after the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Let's see what characterized the church of Jesus Christ in its primitive state. Let us see what the primitive church was like, getting an idea of what is the essence of Christ's church, that we may practice church life in as pure a way as possible, to the glory of Jesus Christ, whose church we are.

TEXT

Acts 2:41-47

BODY

I. See how the primitive church received members

A. sinners heard the preaching about Jesus Christ

1. that all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved
2. that they were sinners, guilty before God even of murder
3. that there is repentance and remission of sins in His name

B. they heard the command to repent and be baptized, and so be saved from their perverse generation

C. they gladly received this word

1. this means they believed

D. they were baptized

E. the Lord added them (verses 41, 47)

F. APPLICATION:

1. this is the essence of what we do today
2. because there was only one church at the time, this was relatively simple
 - a. there was only a church in one place---Jerusalem
 - b. there were no denominations of churches
 - c. there were not multiple churches in one city
 - d. there were no churches that were so corrupt as to make it difficult for believers to participate there
3. now that there are many churches, receiving members is a bit more complex
 - a. there are churches in many places now; believers who have been received at a church in Dallas then move to Bonham, and must be received into another church
 - b. there are many denominations; believers who have been received in one denomination, when they change to another denomination, have to be received into a church of that denomination
 - c. there are multiple churches of the same denomination within any area, and so believers must be received into one church or another of those
 - d. there are many churches so corrupt that believers have a difficult time participating, and must go be received into some other church
4. but despite the process being a bit more complex, we must strive to have it be essentially the same

II. See how the primitive church worshiped (42)

A. They devoted themselves to worship, continuing steadfastly in worship (42a)

B. They observed primarily these four things as elements of worship (42b):

1. the teaching of the apostles

a. in that day, the apostles were there personally

b. in our day, we have their doctrine in writing, in the bible

c. it is all centered on Jesus Christ

2. the fellowship

a. we are in the habit of using the word “fellowship” to talk about the aspect of fellowship that is spending time together, talking, usually including eating

b. but that is only one aspect or phase of what is meant here, and not the primary one

c. observing that there is a communion among believers in Christ

d. making contributions, then, of money to those in need

-Romans 15:26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

-2 Corinthians 8:4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

-Hebrews 13:16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Gill: may rather intend liberality and beneficence, in which sense it is used, Rom_15:26 and so expresses their constant contributions towards the support of the apostles, as ministers of the word and of the poor members of the church; a duty which, in both its branches, is incumbent on those who have it in their power to perform

3. the breaking of bread

a. here used to mean “taking the Lord’s supper”

b. probably also including sharing meals

4. the prayers

a. it seems they were observing the Jewish hours of prayer in the temple

b. we see in later chapters they also were praying on special occasions for certain needs

C. They worshiped in one accord (46)

1. if you are looking at a translation in the RSV strain, you see in 46 that they met “together”

2. see also 1 Timothy 2:8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting [ESV anger or quarreling]

APPLICATION: Could this be said of you? If someone wrote a description of your life regarding worship, would it be said that you devoted yourself, that you continued steadfastly, in the apostles’ teaching, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers? Let us pray and strive to be devoted to these things, unto the Lord.

III. See how the primitive church fellowshiped

- A. they were together (44a)
 - 1. the whole number gathered in the temple (46a)
 - 2. it seems smaller groups went home together (46b), although this might simply reference families being together
- B. those who had something gave to the poor through the church (44b-45; 4:32-35)
 - 1. every person considered his possessions not to be exclusively his own
 - 2. believers sold possessions, and laid the money at the apostles' feet
 - 3. the apostles distributed the money to those in need
 - 4. later the apostles saw that this particular work was not their mission, and so they led the church to appoint other men to handle this money (Acts 6)
- C. they did these things with a wholesome attitude
 - 1. they were glad
 - 2. they were sincere, or single, or simple, in heart
 - Gill: without deceit and hypocrisy; either in their thanksgivings to God, or in their welcome and entertainment of each other; and with great sincerity, openness, and frankness before God, and one another.
 - 3. they were praising God (47a)

IV. See how the primitive church grew

- A. they were protected by the fear that came on everyone (43)
- B. they had favor with all the people (47a)
- C. the Lord added those being saved (47b)
- D. APPLICATION:
 - 1. there is much pressure on churches to see growth in numbers
 - a. from crusade movement
 - b. from modern church growth movement
 - c. from desire for social acceptance
 - d. from need for money to support pastors
 - 2. let us be devoted to worship, living lives of fellowship and obedience
 - 3. let God add to us those who are being saved

CONCLUSION

Let us, with a renewed zeal, devote ourselves to the Lord and to each other as is modeled in the primitive church.

-Let there be a renewed or increased commitment to the meeting together.

-Let there be at the same time a renewed or increased love and accompanying affection, every saint for every other, and all of us for the whole church.

There are many models around us, for how the church should be. Let our primarily model be the Lord's church in its primitive state, as the bible tells us.

Savastio:

Christ said to Saul, “Why are you persecuting Me?”

Were you smashing my van, you might say, “Why are you doing this to me?”

Those truly added to Christ manifest that union through continuing devotion to:

JRY: To what were they added? To the church (see v. 47). How should we say this the best way(s)?

They were added to those who considered each other disciples of Jesus Christ.

verse 43

RWP:

“the more wonder, the more fear”

JFB:

“A deep awe rested upon the whole community.”

Poole:

not just the believers

Clarke:

the preaching and miracles made the whole city fear God

Gill:

“Upon every inhabitant of Jerusalem, at least upon a great many of them”

Barnes:

“upon the people generally”

Calvin:

Those who would have stamped out the church were held at bay in fear largely because of the miracles the apostles were doing.

Call to Worship: Hebrews 12:1-2

Scripture Reading: Psalm 103

Sermon: The Primitive Church Acts 2:41-47

Benediction: Numbers 6:24-26

Grace 102 “Looking Always Unto Jesus”

Trinity 10 Psalm 103

Grace 168 “There Is Life for a Look”

Grace 145 “Sing the Wondrous Love of Jesus”