



INSTRUCTIONS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

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Entry 8 - I

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Church of The Apostles

The structure of the New Testament Church is not well defined in scripture. As a result, the church has adopted many styles for meetings and government. It seems, we will not come to unity on these matters until the Lord returns. Our differences, however, should not hinder us from the essentials of fellowship or spreading the Gospel. While some details of New Testament church life are unclear, others are undeniable. We discover the New Testament church in Acts chapters 2 and 5. They: 1. Prayed, 2. Celebrated the Lord's Supper, 3. Studied the apostles doctrine, 4. Evangelized, 5. Ate meals together, 6. Cared for the poor, 7. Gave themselves to fellowship, 8. Praised God, 9. Served one another, and 10. Discipled new believers. Let's see how the early church did it.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out and the good news of Jesus spread like fire. The Jesus church grew to 3000 in one day, then to 5,000 and within a couple of years to 20,000. It was almost exclusively Jewish, but within a decade it exploded to the nations. Gentiles came en mass and it grew exponentially.

Even persecution could not stop the church. Over the centuries, resistance to Christianity emboldened the saints and fueled revival. Their first persecution came from the Jewish hierarchy. Their attacks, however, lasted for only a few decades; then the Romans struck. Roman persecution against the church was much more severe and it continued for almost 300 years.

Persecution limits the style of service and government within the church. The structure of the underground church in China, for example, is very different from the structure of the Church in America.

The apostles of the early church faced heavy persecution, yet they advanced God's kingdom. Even while under attack, they set a structure in place that was both practical and powerful. The first church had two kinds of meetings, one for powerful apostolic teaching and miracles and the other for personal care and training.

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. [the large meeting] They broke bread in their homes [the small meeting] and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” Acts 2:46

There were two main meetings in the early church; the large, powerful, public meeting on the temple mount; and the house meeting, where intimate fellowship was enjoyed. Even today, both meetings are necessary to facilitate the multi-faceted mandate of the church. Two problems we face today are ambition and individual agendas. The large meeting is wrongly used for personal empire building and the small one is often hi-jacked by individual agendas that lead to splits in the church. We need humility; all meetings must be focused to serve Christ and not ourselves.

Apostles and the Large Public Meeting

Scripture introduces us to the powerful large meeting.

“The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade ... People brought their sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might

fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by the evil spirits, and all of them were healed.” Acts 5:12-16

Pastors did not lead the large meetings; apostles, prophets and evangelists did. Those meetings were held on the temple mount and thousands attended. Solomon’s Colonnade was a roofed-in section of the temple courtyard that faced the Mount of Olives. It was named after King Solomon. The apostles were fearless; even though they faced persecution, they went to this public place and boldly preached the gospel of Christ. God showed up and extraordinary miracles happened. Every sick and demonized person who came from the towns around Jerusalem were healed and delivered from evil spirits. Soon, persecution erupted.

“Then the high priest ... and ... the Sadducees were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he [the angel] said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.”” Acts 5:17-20

The 12 apostles ministered together; they preached with authority and performed miracles

on the temple mount. The Jewish hierarchy was jealous and threw the apostles in prison. (Years later, Peter was imprisoned by Herod and was set free by an angel, but it happened here first. See Acts 12.) The apostles ministered together, went to prison together, and all 12 of them were miraculously set free together, by an angel. Then the angel told them to go back to the temple site and preach the gospel. The apostles did as the angel said and they were arrested again. This time they were whipped, but they still went back and preached on the temple mount.

***“The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.”** Acts 5:41-42*

Apostles and Home Meetings

Today, if we are part of a growing church we face the apostolic challenge. That is to train newcomers to be disciples. The early church was different from modern churches; it was not focused on numbers. They preached the gospel and trained disciples and they left the numbers up to God. The large gathering was for building faith, demonstrations of power, public evangelism, and the fresh revelation of apostolic teaching.

The small meeting facilitated the training of disciples. The house meeting

was for study and discussion. This is very important for newcomers who have just joined the church. They need fellowship and they need to be taught the apostles doctrine so they can catch up with the rest of the congregation. The apostolic doctrine, back then, was to teach the Jews how to move from the Old to the New Covenant. Those apostolic teachings are explained in the Book of Hebrews. Today, most people who are coming to Christ are not Jews and do not have the Old Testament teachings that the Jews had, so the apostolic teaching of today must focus on the Old and New Testaments, with New Covenant revelation. Besides personal instruction, people need pastoral care, counsel and individual prayer. They also need to be trained for the ministry. The house meeting is where they learn to exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit so they can grow to be leaders. In that meeting they become functioning members of the body of Christ. May God help us to be the church of the apostles; one that is powerful and personal, one that fulfills the mandate of Christ.

***“They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer ... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”** Acts 2:42, 46-47 AΩ*



Christians for Messiah Ministries

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