

THE FIRST CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Acts 2:42-47

INTRODUCTION

Since the days of such men as Alexander and Thomas Campbell there have been attempts to restore the New Testament church. That is, to have the church today be like the church of the first century. A church whose member's actions, both individually and collectively, "Speak where the Bible speaks and is silent where the Bible is silent." Or in the words of 1 Pet. 4:11, "If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God."

Using Acts 2:42-47 as our text, we will examine some characteristics of the First Church, the congregation begun on the first day of Pentecost.

NINE CHARACTERISTICS - an exposition of Acts 2:42-47.

A Learning Church (v. 42) - Jesus had charged the Apostles with the great commission, (Mt. 28:19,20). Teaching was the primary objective of their job. If someone is to teach, that necessitates someone to learn. We see from this verse that the church "continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine."

Having Fellowship (v. 42) - common interest and mutual participation in the things that concern the welfare of each other. From such passages as 1 Cor.1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14; and 1 Jn. 1:3,7 we see that in addition to having fellowship with one another the Christian must also be in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Part of this fellowship is "breaking bread," that is the Lord's Supper.

Praying (v.42) - These Christians were not trying to make it on their own. They were turning to God through prayer for strength and wisdom. While the Jews had their hours of prayer, the Christians were constantly in an attitude of prayer.

Reverent (v. 43) - Fear - awesome respect. What inspired this awesome respect? The power of the Word coupled with the signs and wonders performed through the Apostles.

Things Were Happening (v.43) - The Apostles performed signs and wonders, souls were being added to the Church, Christians were having fellowship with one another.

Sharing (v.44,45) - These brethren were together in mind, purpose, faith, and heart. They were responsible for each other's welfare. They took care of each other.

Worshipping (v.46,47) - They worshipped together. Christianity is a communal religion. A religion of gathering; of assembly. They praised God.

Happiness (v. 46) - They "continued steadfastly with one accord." Gladness and single-mindedness go hand in hand!

Respected by Outsiders (v. 47) - A natural consequence of the admirable lives being led by the Christians.

APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH TODAY

Learning - Are we to continue in the Apostle's doctrine? The same teaching taught to the First Church is still in effect today. We are under the same obligation to learn as the disciples in Acts 2.

Fellowship and Sharing - Are we having fellowship and sharing with one another? The thing that separates being a member of the Church from being a member of any social organization is the family aspect of Christianity. The old saying, "blood is thicker than water" applies even that much more when the blood belongs to Jesus Christ. Does 1 Jn. 3:17 apply?

Praying - Are we ready to pray anytime, anyplace. We must be a praying people, to take advantage of two-way communication with the Father.

Reverence - What is our attitude toward the Lord, and His word? Do our lives exemplify the awesome respect for God that His position of power demands?

What's Happening? - Anything? Nothing? Is the church stagnant? While the times of signs and wonders have ceased, other activities of the church are still required. Evangelism, Benevolence and Edification are three things that should be happening.

Worship - Are we worshipping God together? Are we worshipping Him according to the way He wants to be worshipped? Singing, meditating, praying and studying.

Happiness - When we come together is there gladness? What about singleness of mind and purpose? If there is division, dissention, or contention how can there be happiness?

Respect of the Community - If the church is not respected by the community, whose fault is it? We cannot put all the blame for the negative attitudes towards Christianity on the Bakkers and Swaggarts. We can only be held responsible for the attitude of Leesburg towards the church here at Beverly Shores. We must strive to gain the respect of the local community.

CONCLUSION

Some will say that following the pattern of the First Church is not important, practical or applicable to the modern Christians. If not, then following the Apostles doctrine is not important. How do we explain Jesus' words in Mt. 28:18-20 (*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*) and Mk. 16:15,16?

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