

“15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:15-19).

## **WHAT WAS THE 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHURCH OF CHRIST LIKE?**

### **Introduction**

Loved ones, our Lord Jesus was a preacher in agreement with God the Father in everything He taught.

**So, as He began His ministry, He was baptized saying, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness...” (Matthew 3:15).**

**As Jesus came up out of the water, the Father spoke audibly from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).**

**Jesus then taught the need for the people to obey God saying, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).**

**Jesus, and later His apostles, then taught the doctrines of God.**

**He told His apostles, “19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20).**

**Jesus referred to those who obeyed Him as "my church." He said, "I will build my church... and give you the keys to the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 16:18-19).**

He was not talking about any denomination, but about the undenominational kingdom of Christ – the spiritual body of Christ.

**This church/kingdom was NOT established during Jesus' personal ministry, but much was said about it being "at hand" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17).**

Jesus taught His disciples for three years to prepare them for service in His kingdom.

**Then the church or kingdom began "with power" on the Lord's Day, called Pentecost (Acts chapter 2).**

This was fifty days after the Sabbath when Jesus was put in the tomb.

**In fulfillment of prophecy, we have the beginning of the church, belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36-47).**

Let us notice some characteristics of this Jerusalem church.

## **1. The Church Was United.**

**Jesus prayed that all those who would come to believe on Him should be as one, as He and the Father were one (John 17:21).**

It should be obvious to every Bible student that God is not pleased to have those who believe in Jesus Christ divided into hundreds of sects and parties, teaching opposing doctrines.

**The Jerusalem church was not like that: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32).**

Believers in Christ can be united today by laying aside human creeds, and humbly following the apostles' teaching as revealed in the New Testament.

## **2. The Church Was Faithful.**

**“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).**

Their unity was not achieved at the sacrifice of principle. Peter and John were captured and all of the apostles were arrested, beaten, and released.

Stephen was stoned to death, James beheaded, but this church held to its faith.

**Those first century Christians are an example to all believers today to courageously follow the apostles' teaching, to support the cause of Christ with their money and talents, to observe the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, and to pray earnestly in public and private.**

### **3. The Church Was Liberal.**

**“44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:44-45).**

This was an emergency. Thousands who had come to Jerusalem to worship had become Christians and remained to learn the will of the Lord for their lives. Those who had goods and property sold them to meet these unusual needs.

**Today, many believers buy and then say they cannot give. These early Christians sold so they could give.**

Notice that this is voluntary and vastly different from some government systems that deny the right of private property by decree.

#### **4. The Church Was Strict.**

**Even in the first church there were hypocrites. One Christian couple lied about the gift they gave (Acts 5:1-11).**

**However, the hypocrites did not nullify the blessing of the pure in heart.**

Hypocrites in the church today will not justify sinners staying out of Christ.

**The Holy Spirit says, “16 These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 a proud look, A LYING TONGUE, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16-19).**

Let the action of the Holy Spirit warn all hypocrites.  
Ananias and Sapphira lied. They both fell dead. What  
would happen where you live if all who practice lying or  
any of the other six sins in Proverbs 6 would drop dead?

## **5. The Church Was Zealous.**

**The church began with about three thousand members  
who were immersed the first day (Acts 2:38-41).**

**Soon there were 5,000 men (Acts 4:4).**

**It continued to multiply (Acts 5:14).**

**Even when persecution scattered many members, they  
went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4).**

Today, those who hold to various political and social philosophies put many who profess to believe in Christ to shame by their zeal.

**Let us imitate that first church and take the world for Christ.**

## **Summary**

So, Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, taught His followers that only the obedient would enter the kingdom of heaven, and referred to those who followed His teachings as "His church." That's what He preached.

Isn't that what preachers are to preach today? Isn't baptism still necessary for modern man? Isn't obedience to God still mandatory?

**Aren't Jesus' followers all throughout the world still the "churches of Christ"? (Romans 16:16).**

So why are some preachers now rejecting the need for baptism, opposing the practice of obedience to biblical commands, and dropping the name of Christ from church references?

This is no small matter. Isn't it time to point out the distinct differences between Jesus' preaching and this pop culture preaching?

**All preachers who are following this new path are false teachers, not representing Jesus truthfully at all.**

**May we urge you to reread the Book of Acts and dedicate your life and talents to spreading the New Testament Christian faith (Romans 10:17).**

**Jesus Christ will always be the ONLY hope of the world.**

## **Conclusion**

**Loved ones, a strange statement often overheard is,  
"Well, it doesn't make any difference what you  
believe...."**

Is this statement an accurate reflection of the will of God,  
or is it man's wishful thinking? Is the statement designed  
to please God, or to please men?

**The 27 books of the New Testament, God's will for man  
in this age, teach that it does matter what one believes.**

**It matters if we believe in God. Hebrews 11:6 says, "He  
that cometh to God must believe that He is...."**

**It matters if we believe in Christ. Jesus said in John 8:24,  
"Except ye believe I am He, ye shall die in your sins."**

**It matters if we believe the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:12 says, "That they all might be damned who believe not the truth...."**

**The truth is God's Word (John 17:17).**

**It matters if we believe false prophets and teachers. John, the apostle of love, said, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God..." (1 John 4:1).**

**Peter wrote, "...there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them..." (2 Peter 2:1).**

**The negative which says, "What we believe doesn't matter," discourages research, stifles investigation, and puts a premium on ignorance.**

**Unless error is the same as truth, up the same as down, and yes the same as no, then it does matter what we believe.**

**The Bible says Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).**

**The Lord commands His Gospel to be preached to every creature under heaven, and "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).**

Does it matter what one believes about "gravity"? Yes, but it matters more what one believes about "faith."

**Think carefully, if it doesn't matter what you believe — then it doesn't matter if you believe!**

## **Invitation**

**Are you outside of Christ? If so, you are not prepared for the 2nd coming of Christ.**

**If you do not KNOW that you are prepared, then you are not.**

**H, B, R, C, B**