

## Topic

### ● I INTRODUCTION

- **A A group of people experienced the reality of Jesus in their lives after He had died**
  - 1 They realized from this experience that "Jesus Christ is Lord"
  - 2 At first, this experience was probably limited to
    - a Those who travelled with Him
    - b Those we call "disciples"
  - 3 But then some who had doubted when Jesus was alive believed and experienced
    - a This included members of His blood family
    - b Each of the Gospels reflect scenes that show that during the ministry of Jesus none of His blood family believed in Him
      - (1) Mark 3:20
        - (a) And He \*came home, and the crowd \*gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. 21 When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."
      - (2) Matthew 12:46
        - (a) But while He yet talked with the people, behold, His mother and His brothers stood outside, desiring to speak with Him. 47 Then one said to Him, Behold, Your mother and Your brothers stand outside, desiring to speak with You.
        - (b) 48 And He answered and said to him who told Him, Who is My mother? And who are My brothers? 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, Behold, My mother and My brothers!
        - (c) 50 For whoever shall do the will of My Father in Heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother.
      - (3) Luke 8:20
        - (a) And it was told to Him by some, who said, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside desiring to see You. 21 And He answered and said to them, My mother and My brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it.
      - (4) John 7:5
        - (a) For His brothers did not believe in Him.
    - c Acts shows they (some at least of His family) believed after Easter
      - (1) Acts 1:12
        - (a) Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount Of Olive Grove, which is a sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem.
        - (b) 13 And when they had come in, they went up into an upper room, where Peter and James, and John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphas and Simon Zealots, and Judas the brother of James;
        - (c) 14 these all were continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
      - d In Mark (and, possibly, Matthew) even His mother, Mary, is included in those who don't believe
        - (1) His family represented all those who claim an automatic blood relationship with Jesus
        - (2) These Gospels end with Mary (and the other family members who represent the old Israel) still outside while Jesus is inside with believers who represent the Church
      - e But not in Luke and John
        - (1) In Luke Mary gathers with the Church in prayer after Easter
          - (a) Acts 1:12\*
            - [1] Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.

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- c Finally even Greeks! Pagans! experienced Jesus in their lives
  - (1) Acts 10:24\*
    - (a) The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25\* As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence.
    - (b) ...28\* He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. 29\* So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection.
    - (c) 34\* Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35\* but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.
    - (d) ... 44\* While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.
    - (e) 45\* The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46\* For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said,
    - (f) 47\* "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." 48\* So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.
- B In this experience of the Risen, Living Jesus, these Christians knew that God's Kingship had entered their world
  - 1 There was a surprising element to the Kingship,
    - a Jesus was not on fire with anger against His foes and sinners
    - b This anger was what John the Baptist and others before him expected the Messiah to express
  - 2 Instead, this experience of Jesus in their lives offered them the ability
    - a To love
    - b To serve
    - c To heal
    - d To restore order
    - e To help their enemies (as Jesus had towards His)
  - 3 There is no reference in Acts to any hostile reaction to persecutors
  - 4 When his preaching was rejected by the Jews, Paul turned to the Gentiles
    - a Acts 13:42\*
      - (1) 42\* As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath.
      - (2) 43\* When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.
      - (3) 44\* On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45\* When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.
      - (4) 46\* Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. 47\* For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."
      - (5) 48\* When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. 49\* The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.
      - (6) 50\* But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them

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*from their region. 51\* So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconic.*

- 5 As Paul entered a new town, he didn't allow earlier rejections by Jewish leaders to deter him; he always began preaching in the synagogue
  - a In Iconic, Paul persevered despite rejection from both Jews and Gentiles
  - b Acts 14:1
    - (1) At Iconic Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.
    - (2) 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.
    - (3) 3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.
- C During the centuries that have passed since Easter, Jesus continues His presence in our world through His Spirit
  - 1 Jesus continues to act in and through all sorts of individuals
  - 2 Jesus continues to act very differently than we expect Him to act
- D In the activity of Jesus which is continued in the Church through His Spirit
  - 1 **The Kingship of God is already in our world**
  - 2 **The Kingship is present through those filled with the Spirit of Jesus, the Church**
    - a Like a seed that is slowly growing
    - b A seed that will have a **tremendous yield!**
- E The Biblical word we translate as "church" referred to a people, not to just a gathering of individuals
  - 1 It had a specific meaning in its OT uses
    - a It referred to God's "**assembly**"
    - b We must remember how this assembling occurred
      - (1) **God took the initiative**
        - (a) This word accents "**election**"
        - (b) It should remind us of the grace and privilege of being His People
      - (2) **He took the initiative to do more than just call individuals**
        - (a) **He called them to be part of a people**
        - (b) He called them to assemble together
        - (c) **He called them to be a community**
      - (3) **He made a covenant with a people**
        - (a) Exodus 24:1
          - [1] *Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadir and Abide, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, 2 but Moses alone is to approach the LORD; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him."*
          - [2] **3 When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do."**
          - [3] *4 Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel.*
          - [4] *5 Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD.*
          - [5] **6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar.**

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- [6] 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." 8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."
  - (b) The covenant was with each of the tribes together -- the stones represented the separate tribes, not individual peoples
  - (4) This people responded as a People!
- 2 The NT had its own typical uses for the word
  - a The NT employed the word used in the Septuagint Greek translation of the Hebrew OT for God's "assembly"
  - b In the Greek, the word is "*ecclesia*"
    - (1) "*The people God has called*"
    - (2) **Again God's initiative is spotlighted**
  - c God elects for a purpose: for a mission
    - (1) *God does not elect because of merit*
    - (2) *Election then is always a responsibility, a vocation, never a reward*
- F So the "Day of the Lord" has begun -- but is not yet completed
  - 1 **That great day when our God personally intervenes in our history**
    - a He does it to save us
    - b He does it to establish a peace that lasts forever
  - 2 **After Pentecost, Jesus is still experienced within the Church but not fully experienced, not physically experienced**
  - 3 **The consequences of this experience are significant**
    - a For our mission as the Church
    - b For our unity as the Church
- II THE CHURCH -- TWO BASIC NT VIEWS
  - A [1] The Church is a community waiting for Jesus to complete what He has already begun
    - 1 **His Spirit was experienced by them**
      - a They knew "love" and "peace" in their hearts and lives
      - b They experienced new powers in their service to others
    - 2 **Because of this experience, the Church was threatened by the world**
      - a And yet it knew that Jesus had conquered this world
      - b **They were certain He would perfect what He had begun**
        - (1) What He had begun in their world -- all of the Church's external foes would be conquered
        - (2) What He had begun within individual Christians
          - (a) All of the limitations of the "flesh" would be ended
          - (b) They would be perfected in His Spirit
    - 3 **These Christians gathered weekly**
      - a Acts 2:46
        - (1) *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.*
        - (2) *47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*
      - b **They expected Jesus to return before the dawn on Sunday morning**
        - (1) Creation had begun on the first day of the week

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- (2) Re-creation (Easter) had begun on the first day of the week
- (3) The New Creation (Pentecost, the Church) had begun on the first day of the week
- (4) So the Final Creation would begin on the first day of the week
- c **Consequently, they gathered Saturday evening to prepare themselves to greet Jesus**
  - (1) They spent the night in a vigil of prayer, singing, OT readings, sharing memories of Jesus
  - (2) They celebrated the Eucharist only after the sun rose and they accepted the reality that Jesus would not return that day
- d **They remained eager week after week for Jesus to complete the experience of His love that they shared**
  - (1) So many passages in Paul's letters reflect this same eager anticipation for the return of Jesus
  - (2) *Maranatha: Come, Lord Jesus!*
    - (a) 1 Corinthians 16:22
      - [1] Let anyone be accursed who has no love for the Lord. Our Lord, come!
    - (b) Revelation 22:20
      - [1] The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.
  - (3) Paul includes no note of fear or anxiety regarding this climatic event; just eager expectation
- B [2] *The Church is a community acting, a Church with a mission*
  - 1 Matthew
    - a Matthew 28:17
      - (1) *When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*
      - (2) 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
    - b Strangely, not much is said about this responsibility in the rest of the Gospel
    - c Matthew's fifth and final sermon has a message to the Church as it lived each day
      - (1) More of "be alert:" be prepared, watchful, alert for the return
      - (2) Than of "be active:" be involved working with others, carrying the message
  - 2 Luke
    - a Our mission is central to our existence as the Church: this truth inspired him to write a second booklet, Acts
      - (1) He included a challenging question early in Acts
        - (a) Acts 1:11
          - [1] "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?
      - (2) There is a teaching behind this question
        - (a) We have more to do than wait for Jesus to return
        - (b) We have a mission to perform on earth
        - (c) If all we're doing is looking up to the Heavens for Jesus, we won't be able to see the people here on earth we have been sent to help
    - b His second book, Acts, is inspiring in its practical meaning for us today
      - (1) Its significance is clear only when it is read together with Luke's Gospel

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- (2) Reading the two works together allows us to see parallels between Jesus and the Church
  - (a) Both Jesus and the Church preach, heal, and teach
  - (b) Some of the miracles worked by the Church echoed those worked by Jesus
- (3) Our mission in the Spirit is equal in importance to the mission of Jesus!
- c In Acts, Jesus is with the Church 40 days
  - (1) The "40" is symbolic (as numbers usually are in the Bible)
    - (a) Acts 1:1
      - [1] *In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning 2 until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.*
      - [2] 3 After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.
  - (2) The number assures us that Jesus is teaching us everything we need to know about the Kingship
    - (a) Not by offering us a catechism containing all detailed truths and ideas
    - (b) But by offering us a love that is
      - [1] Free
      - [2] Complete
      - [3] Universal
  - (3) During this time, Jesus gave the Church our mission
    - (a) Acts 1:8
      - [1] "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
    - (b) What kind of people did Jesus commission to save the world -- to represent Him?
      - [1] They were all losers
        - {1} They all abandoned Him in the Garden
        - {2} None of them believed in His promise of Resurrection
        - {3} They were greedy, ambitious, jealous, quarrelsome
      - [2] They were not societal leaders -- the rich, educated, religiously important, spiritually dedicated
        - {1} They were not priests and scribes and Pharisees
        - {2} On the contrary, these future saviors were fishermen and crooks
      - [3] How would a Personnel Director rate Jesus in His selections?
        - {1} Remember the fate of the world hung on these choices!
        - {2} Jesus chose average men --
          - ((1)) Blue collar workers
          - ((2)) Not men educated above the norm
        - {3} It was impossible for these men to complete their assigned task
          - ((1)) And yet they did -- or rather Jesus did through them
          - ((2)) This miracle can offer us hope as we look around at who we are and then look at the impossible mission facing us
  - (c) We are to witness to Jesus

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- [1] Not on our own ability
- [2] **But by the power of His Spirit -- a Spirit of loving service**
- (d) **Acts 1:8 summarizes what actually happened**
  - [1] The mission spread in these expanding circles
  - [2] But how did it spread?
    - {1} Reading between the lines of the NT is very interesting and informative
    - {2} **Jesus was not a missionary in our sense of the word**
      - ((1)) In all probability He never left Jewish soil
      - ((2)) None of the Pagans healings were done directly
        - ((a)) The centurion's son was healed from a distance
        - ((b)) The Syro-Phonicean's daughter was healed from a distance
    - {3} The early Church remained much the same after the Ascension
      - ((1)) They stayed in Jerusalem despite the mission given them by Jesus
      - ((2)) The "Twelve" were not "Apostolic!"
      - ((3)) As a matter of fact, Acts tells us of trips by only 2 of the 12 apostles outside Jerusalem -- Peter and John
      - ((4)) Acts 8:14
        - ((a)) When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.
        - ((b)) 15 When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.
        - ((c)) 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
  - [3] **However, Jesus was a missionary in another sense of the word**
    - {1} He left His Father's side to come to us
    - {2} **Then He witnessed to the Father in the circle of His life**
    - {3} **He asks us to do the same**
      - ((1)) Not to go to China to preach to strangers
      - ((2)) But to witness to the love we have freely received
      - ((3)) To witness in the circle of our world
        - ((a)) By this witnessing to touch people's lives
        - ((b)) By it, to change people's lives

## ● III TERMS

- A "Disciple"
  - 1 **The term refers to a follower of Jesus**
    - a One He 'called'
      - (1) Being Christian, therefore, is not the result of a decision of ours
        - (a) We might think it is
        - (b) But we are wrong when we so think
      - (2) **Being Christian was the result of "Election"**
    - b "Calls" are listed in each of the Gospels
  - 2 **Remember the way a classic call is presented in the NT**

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- a Jesus walks up to someone and invites, "Follow me"
  - (1) In Mark and Matthew those He calls have no previous experience of Jesus
    - (a) Mark 1:16
      - [1] As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."
    - (b) The starkness and suddenness of the call is intended to show us the power in Jesus' summons. His love
      - [1] There is something magnetic to the presence of Jesus
      - [2] There is something magnetic to our being loved
    - (c) We want to stay with the experience, to be loved
  - (2) In Luke, the call follows an experience of the power of Jesus to change lives
    - (a) He heals Simon's mother-in-law
      - [1] Luke 4:38
        - {1} After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. 39 Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them
    - (b) He produces a miraculous catch of fish for Simon
      - [1] Luke 5:4
        - {1} When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."
        - {2} 5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.
    - (c) Only then does Jesus invite them to follow Him
      - [1] Luke 5:10
        - {1} Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.
    - (d) Some are drawn to want to know love by seeing how love has transformed the lives of others
- b And they do follow Jesus
  - (1) That's all they do
  - (2) They stay with Jesus
- c At times they are exactly as blind and as greedy as the foes of Jesus
  - (1) They doubt Him, don't understand Him, argue with Him
  - (2) But they stay with Him
- d Jesus is love, active love, or better: Jesus is love loving, love acting to serve
  - (1) Staying with Him is an invitation to let oneself experience love
  - (2) Accepting and staying with Jesus is experiencing the many facets of love
    - (a) Love heals
    - (b) Loves cleanses
    - (c) Love forgives
    - (d) Love feeds
    - (e) And love does all this freely



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- e So the call, the election, is simply God inviting us to be loved by Him
- 3 There are no prerequisites to the call
  - a Nothing a person need believe first
  - b No standards of living a person need achieve first
  - c No ceremonies a person need attend first
  - d Just the call to "Follow me"
- 4 Today, there are some who still try to place prerequisites on following Jesus
  - a People are told to clean up their marriage
  - b People are told to clean up their family
  - c If they can, why do they need Jesus as a Savior?
- 5 A person can still be in an "occasion of sin" and be called by Jesus -- I was because of my drinking
  - a Levi [aka "Matthew"]
    - (1) Mark 2:14
      - (a) As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphas sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.
    - (2) Tax collector
    - (3) Heretic
    - (4) Thief
    - (5) Traitor
  - b Jesus came to him in his "occasion of sin"
    - (1) And asked him, Levi, to follow
    - (2) Jesus did this with no prerequisites, no terms, demanding no promises -- not even that Levi change his ways
  - c Why?
    - (1) The call of another tax collector, Zachaeus, answers "why"
      - (a) Luke 19:9
        - [1] Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."
      - (2) Jesus issued the call to bring salvation to Zachaeus' house
      - (3) Only after Zachaeus experiences salvation does he respond by changing his life
        - (a) The change does not cause the salvation
        - (b) It is a response to salvation experienced
      - (c) Luke 19:8
        - [1] Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much."
- 6 Discipleship is
  - a Baptism
  - b Christmas
  - c In both, love enters our lives freely, as a gift
- B "The Twelve"
  - 1 From all of His disciples, Jesus selected twelve
  - 2 Mark and Matthew refer to them only as "The Twelve"

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- a **Mark 3:13**
  - (1) He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message.
  - (2) 15 and to have authority to cast out demons. 16 So he appointed the twelve:
- b **Matthew 6:7**
  - (1) He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.
- c Luke alone unites the title with "apostles"
- 3 "The Twelve" as a title has its own importance, independent of any reference to "Apostle"
  - a **Jesus was forming the New Israel, the New People of God**
    - (1) The First Israel was descended from the 12 sons of Jacob, Israel
      - (a) Membership in it was based on physical blood
      - (b) It was based on an automatic relationship, birth
    - (2) **Membership in the New Israel is based on doing the will of God**
      - (a) There is nothing automatic to it -- it is based on believing in Jesus, on accepting Him as Christ and Saviour
      - (b) Because Judas stopped believing he couldn't serve any longer as a member of "The Twelve,"
        - (1) **Acts 1:16**
          - {1} Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus — 17 for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.
          - {2} .....20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it'; and 'Let another take his position of overseer.' 21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,
          - {3} 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us —one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection."
        - [2] He couldn't continue as a spiritual ancestor for the People of God
    - (c) He was replaced, therefore, by Matthais
      - [1] He was replaced by someone who enjoyed a full experience of Jesus
      - [2] The use of lots to select his replacement is Luke's way of showing that God made the selection
      - [3] **Acts 1:24**
        - {1} Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."
        - {2} 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthais; and he was added to the eleven apostles.
    - (d) But when another member of "The Twelve," James, was killed, he did not need to be replaced
      - [1] **Acts 12:1**
        - {1} About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. 2 He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword.
        - [2] James could continue to serve as a spiritual ancestor
- b **The New Israel, the Church, has an eschatological mission**
  - (1) **The final age is here in the New Israel**

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- (2) *The Twelve* will share thrones with Jesus in judging the world; ("saving" the world)
  - (a) Matthew 19:28
    - [1] Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
  - (b) Their lives denounce the false values of the world -- that's a judgement on the world
  - (c) Their witness and mission announce the world is worthy of love -- that's a judgement on the world
  - (d) To understand their mission as judges, we must remember that a Biblical "judge" saves the helpless; he does not rule on innocence or guilt
- C "Apostle"
  - 1 The early Church believed there were many "apostles," far more than just twelve
  - 2 An "apostle" was someone who was sent by another with a special
    - a Mission
    - b Delegation
    - c An official representative of the sender
  - 3 Paul considers himself to be an apostle even though he was never one of "*The Twelve*"
    - a 1 Corinthians 9:5
      - (1) Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?
  - 4 And Paul offers us the names of several others whom he claims are "apostles"
    - a Romans 16:7
      - (1) Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles.
    - b It is interesting to note that Junia, called an apostle by Paul, was a woman!
  - 5 He also includes "apostles" as one of the charismatic ministries present in local churches
    - a 1 Corinthians 12:28
      - (1) And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.
  - 6 Only Luke limits "apostles" to "*The Twelve*" and unites the two terms
    - a For him an apostle needs to have been with Jesus from His baptism through His Ascension
      - (1) In Luke, the Twelve Apostles do not flee from Jesus when He is arrested as they do in Mark and Matthew, nor are they dismissed by Him as they are in John
    - (a) Matthew 26:56
      - [1] Then all the disciples deserted him and fled. 57 Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered.
    - (b) Mark 14:50
      - [1] All of them deserted him and fled. 51 A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.
    - (c) John 18:8
      - [1] Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." 9 This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me."
    - (d) Luke 22:54

## Topic

- [1] Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance.
- [2] Nothing is said about the others fleeing
- [3] The implication is that they don't flee; they follow Jesus
- (2) They experience all of His passion, death, and Resurrection
- **b Luke has a theological reason for the disciples not fleeing:**
  - (1) Those whom Jesus sends in His name experience everything that He is
    - (a) Their witness is not faulty or incomplete
    - (b) The New Israel enjoys a complete witness of Jesus
  - (2) The New Israel has a commission to witness to this Jesus in their world
- **c They delegate this mission to others**
  - (1) **But they must**
    - (a) Commission those whom they sent
    - (b) And accept those who join
  - (2) **The unity of the Church demanded that they, the 'patriarchs' of the New Israel accept all new communities into harmony with them**
  - (3) **The Church spread quickly to Samaria**
    - (a) Peter and John were sent to check out the new community and accept it into communion with "**The Twelve**"
    - (b) Acts 8:14
      - [1] Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit
      - [2] 16 (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). 17 Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
  - (4) **The Antioch Church commissioned Paul before he began his missionary journey**
    - (a) He did not preach on his own authority
    - (b) He was representing the Antioch Church and, since it was in harmony with "**The Twelve**," the New Israel
      - [1] Acts 13:1
        - {1} Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Mann a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul.
        - {2} 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.
  - (c) This Antioch Church was itself a branch of the Jerusalem Church
    - [1] Acts 11:20
      - {1} But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. 21 The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord.
      - {2} 22 News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.
      - {3} 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord

## Topic

- d The imposition of hands was used again and again by Luke to show unity, community, and commissioning
- 7 Why does Luke unite the titles "*The Twelve*" and "*Apostles*?"
  - a Luke unites the titles because of the experience he has of the Church's vocation to witness
    - (1) The *Twelve* as "*The Twelve*" represent the whole Church
    - (2) "*The Twelve*" represent the Church as a community, not as 12 separate individuals
  - b A Church standing around waiting, praying for Jesus to return is inadequate, is not enough
    - (1) Such an idle church would be inadequate to express the "*Twelve*" -- because they are all "*apostles*"
      - (a) They must do more than just be symbolic "*judges*" sitting on thrones at the end of time
      - (b) This waiting to judge flows from the image of *The Twelve* presented in Mark, but it is not adequate for Luke
      - (c) It is not adequate because *The Twelve* are *The Twelve Apostles*
        - [1] In the interim before the return of Jesus they have work to do
        - [2] They are delegated as witnesses to the four corners of the world
    - (2) An idle church is also inadequate for the Church which "*The Twelve*" oversee
  - c A mission to others is integral to Luke's experience of the Spirit of the Church
- IV THE HISTORICAL SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY
  - A Historically, the *Twelve Apostles* were not very apostolic!
    - 1 Acts 8:14
      - a When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.
      - b 15 When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.
      - c 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
      - d 25 When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.
    - 2 According to the NT, only Peter and John of "*The Twelve*" ever leave Jerusalem
      - a And they only make sorties out to check on what others have done
      - b They are sent
        - (1) To inspect
        - (2) To approve
        - (3) To accept into communion with the mother Church
    - 3 All other traditions about countries where the *Twelve* die are
      - a Appear late in time -- long after the NT period ended
      - b And have no reliable historical support
  - B The NT evidence is interesting regarding the slow realization by the Church of its apostolic mission
    - 1 After Pentecost, the Church remained in Jerusalem
      - a The Church spread as people from the city and its suburbs came into contact with Christians and were touched by the way they shared the Good news
      - b The Jewish religion, by the nature of its membership, was not missionary, not apostolic
        - (1) Membership flowed from birth, birth from a Jewish mother

## Topic

- (2) **Membership did not flow from belief in God**
- (3) Converts, proselytes, could be added if they would accept circumcision
  - (a) This act "adopted" them into the People, the "descendants" of Abraham
  - (b) By membership in the People they were entitled to the promises God had made to Israel
- 2 A persecution was needed to start the real spread of the Church
  - a **The first Christians, all Jews, divided into two very different groups**
    - (1) **Hebrew/Aramaic speakers**
      - (a) Their background was in the Holy Land
      - (b) They based their Jewish faith on the Temple and animal sacrifice
    - (2) **Greek speakers**
      - (a) They were raised elsewhere in the world ("The Diaspora") and then moved to Jerusalem
      - (b) Consequently, they based their Jewish faith on observing the Law
      - (c) **The Temple was unimportant to their faith**
  - b **Friction developed between the groups**
    - (1) Acts 6:1
      - (a) Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.
      - (b) 2 And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables.
      - (c) 3 Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, 4 while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word."
      - (d) 5 What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.
    - (2) The Greek speakers felt their needs were being ignored by the Twelve Apostles
    - (3) **The Greek speakers received their own leaders**
      - (a) Steven was selected as one of these leaders
      - (b) He became the first Christian martyr
  - c Reading carefully we can see that the persecution resulted from their attitude towards the Temple
    - (1) Greek speakers dismissed it -- consequently they faced opposition from the Temple leaders
    - (2) Stephen was arrested and stoned to death -- his speech reflects his attitude toward the Temple
      - (a) Acts 7:47
        - [1] But it was Solomon who built the house for him.
        - [2] 48 "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: 49 "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be?"
        - [3] 50 Has not my hand made all these things?"
        - [4] 51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute?"

## **Topic**

- (3) In the persecution that began, all *Twelve Apostles* were allowed to remain peacefully in Jerusalem
  - (a) Acts 8:1\*
    - [1] And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
- (4) Only the Greek speakers were forced to flee
  - (a) God's providence was involved in this
  - (b) These Greek speakers were the ones who would flee to Greek cities
  - (c) In these Greek cities (Antioch became the first) their preaching would be heard and accepted by Greeks as well as Jews
- C The most radical spread of Christianity was done with no debate
  - 1 There was debate over admitting and baptizing
    - a Greeks
    - b Children
  - 2 But we have not a shred of evidence that the spread of Christianity to women was ever questioned!
    - a Galatians 3:26
      - (1) You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
      - (2) 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
      - (3) 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
    - b Women were Baptized
      - (1) Therefore, they had full equality with Christian men
      - (2) They enjoyed the full life of Jesus Christ!
  - 3 What makes this expansion radical is the fact that there was no tradition in the Jewish faith for admitting women
    - a Men were circumcised
    - b There was no ceremony of any type to admit women
- D There were problems involved with admitting pagans -- The Pagan Problems
  - 1 It is easy to overlook the fact that there are two problems involved in admitting pagans to Christianity
    - a Today we would face only one of these
    - b There is, therefore, a failure in our understanding and expression of Christianity
  - 2 The First Problem: Can Pagans/Greeks become Christians without becoming Jews?
    - a The NT shows the answer God wanted
      - (1) Peter's Vision showed that God wanted pagans in the Church
        - (a) Acts 10:15
          - [1] The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." 16 This happened three times.
      - (2) The Jerusalem Council expressed the Church's acceptance of God's guidance
        - (a) Acts 15:5
          - [1] But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses."...

## Topic

- [2] 22 Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas ..., and Silas,... 23 with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.
- [3] 24 Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds,
- [4] 25 we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. ...
- [5] 28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."
- (3) **Matthew's Mission Statement reflected a catholic, universal mission for Jesus, and, thus for the Church**
  - (a) Matthew 28:19
    - [1] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
- (4) **But the NT pictures are idealized, otherwise there would have been no problem after Pentecost**
- b **There were different attitudes towards the pagans among the first Christians**
  - (1) [1] They must become Jews, following the kosher laws
  - (2) [2] They must accept a few requirements of the Law
  - (3) [3] They need accept no requirements from the Law at all -- this view, of course, ultimately prevailed
- c **The pagans, of course, were admitted and soon dominated the Church**
  - (1) Acts ends with the Paul preaching and teaching in Rome where a Church already exists
  - (2) Mark's Church was obviously composed of Greeks unfamiliar with the Law -- Jewish practices needed to be explained in this Gospel
- d **The destruction of Jerusalem may have finally silenced all opposition to the pagans**
  - (1) For a practical reason: Christians conservatives were wiped out as they rallied to the defense of Jerusalem
  - (2) For a theological reason: The destruction was seen as God passing judgement on the Jewish faith
- e **Practical experience may have resolved this question -- the pagans received the Spirit (Cornelius)**
  - (1) Acts 10:44\*
    - (a) While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.
    - (b) 45\* The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46\* For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.
    - (c) Then Peter said, 47\* "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." 48\* So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.
  - (2) **Christians noticed things happening to pagans who believed in Jesus without becoming circumcised**
    - (a) **These pagan converts experienced the same peace and blessings of the Spirit as did those who were first circumcised**



## Topic

- (b) Therefore God was showing by His gift of the Spirit that obeying the Jewish Law was not a prerequisite to receiving the Spirit of Jesus
- 3 The Second Problem: Can there be table fellowship between pagans and Jews once they are admitted?
  - a This was actually the more serious problem
    - (1) And, sadly, it is the one we wouldn't have
    - (2) It's a problem that we have trouble grasping because of the variety and multiplication of Christian churches we know
    - (3) We'd just set up separate Christian churches or parishes
  - b Mark wrestled with and had Jesus resolve the problem in a key section of His Gospel
    - (1) A major section of His Gospel featured Jesus crossing the lake; he faces storms each of the first two times He tries to cross the lake to its pagan side
      - (a) Some do not want Jesus to love everybody equally without prerequisites
        - [1] They want His love, service, forgiveness, reserved for *their* kind, *their* parish, *their* nation
        - [2] Jesus ministers and feeds equally both sides, Jew and Christian
      - (b) At the end of the section Jesus declares all foods clean
        - [1] Mark 7:18
          - {1} He said to them, "Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, 19 since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.)
          - {2} 20 And he said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles. [That is: renders unclean, isolates]
        - (c) Actually Jesus is declaring all peoples clean
    - (2) One bread (Jesus) will feed both pagans and Jews
      - (a) Mark 8:14
        - [1] Now the disciples had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. 15 And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out--beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod."
        - [2] 16 They said to one another, "It is because we have no bread." 17 And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?
        - [3] 18 Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve."
        - [4] 20 "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 Then he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"
- c Paul displayed his anger toward Peter for wavering on this point under pressure from conservatives
  - (1) He does this in his letter to the Galatians
  - (2) He tell us that he confronted Peter and told him he was wrong
    - (a) Galatians 2:11
      - [1] But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned;
      - [2] 12 for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction.
  - (3) There was no problem in accepting pagans as Christians
    - (a) Rather the problem dealt with joining with them at a table for a meal

**Topic**

- (b) Paul knew there must only be one table
- (4) The "One Bread" quickly became a sign of the unity of the whole Church
  - (a) The sharing of one loaf of bread testified to Church unity
  - (b) It was used to show community with a new Church
    - [1] A local Bishop sent delegates to it with bread from the Lord's table
    - [2] This bread symbolized communion
      - {1} Not just with Jesus
      - {2} But with the Bishop's church
      - {3} And thus with all church communities in the area
    - [3] The local group was not part of Church without this Bread
- 4 Pagans were accepted and invited to table fellowship
  - a We need to see whom we would not welcome to sit with us at table
  - b Our mission continues as we are called
    - (1) To be apostolic
    - (2) To be catholic
  - c Only our experiencing love coming to us as grace can allow us to attempt this
- E Eventually the need to witness, to be apostolic, helped Christianity reach out
  - 1 All through the Empire
  - 2 All through Europe
  - 3 Into Asia and Africa as well
- V THE HISTORICAL WITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY
  - A All through the years of spread and the years of turmoil and the years of darkness the Church grew
    - 1 The Church continued to witness to the mission of Jesus
    - 2 Someone, somewhere in the Church was moved to reach out to touch God's suffering children
    - 3 Often they gathered others around them to join in this service as Mother Teresa did
  - B This enduring ministry is living proof that the Spirit of Jesus stays vibrant in His people the Church
    - 1 We must be sensitive to the need of the Spirit to minister to the hurting
    - 2 Otherwise the Spirit must -- and will!!!! -- move outside the organized churches to minister independently of them
      - a I believe that's why God established the Salvation Army
      - b I believe God established it because drinking drunks were not welcome in any organized Christian community
- VI CONCLUSION
  - A The dual aspects of the early Church continues today
    - 1 We are called to wait for Jesus to complete the love He has begun in us
    - 2 And we are called to witness to this love to all in our world
  - B We are called to do both in community