

1901- Acts 2:42-47 TRUE CHURCH LIFE

PRELIMS. Peter has called the Israelites to repent and be baptised and they would receive the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. What we have in the next verse is the **essential elements** of a real Church! Of a Church that turned the world upside down in 30 years!

The IMPACT the CHURCH MADE

When the Church concentrates on **these four functions**, things happen! *and awe came upon every soul* [43]! **APP** Awe is a **lost experience** these days! When were **you** last filled with awe?

Gr=Reverence! Their 'fear' did not mean a **frightened** fear but meant a **healthy respect** for the Apostles! These Xns were respected for they were *having favour with all the people* [47] When people hear the Truth and 'see' it **consistently practiced**, they do see the **benefit** of it! They might **not admit** it, but they **secretly agree** with it.

There is so much common sense as well as true wisdom in Xn **doctrine** that common people respect it – the problem is, they seldom hear it to appreciate it! That's why its important that Xns spread the Word and their beliefs to as many people as possible. Many people don't realise how much **the common world** would agree with the Scriptures **if** they only knew what it actually taught!

Next, they performed *many wonders and signs were being done* [43] These were not magical tricks to fascinate the public – they were mainly **healings** and things which **helped** and **relieved** the public! The Apostles had the gift of miracles – and if we don't have it (which probably 100% of us don't) then we Xs **must do public acts of righteousness/works of mercy!** We must not hide our light I but be **public** with our good works. Xns **must** get much more involved in **civic** and **national** life to demonstrate that Xnity **cares** for society!

Sharing their goods. Some people think [44,45] suggest Xns were the 1st **communists!** No! They *had all things in common* **only** as a result of believers **voluntarily** giving of their surplus. It was **not compulsory** as in Communism or the **State taxing the rich!** There was no law or rule (as the Moses tithe was!) It was a **donation** from

their **own free will** and **generosity**!

It **wasn't** given to everyone – it was only to those who were in **need** – and only **AS any had need** [45] It was **NOT** making people **EQUAL** It was helping the **poor** with the **necessities** of life – it wasn't providing them with luxuries. *Neither was it giving to a **central fund** for a communal ownership, or a **political** or economic system of distribution. It was an **individual, personal voluntary** giving to another **individual** as much as that donator wished to give!

Some were **selling their possessions and belongings** [45] That was **wonderful**? But then you see, they were strong Xns and really believed **everything** they had was on **loan** from God! **He** owned it! They also believed that 'God was no man's debtor' – He would more than compensate for what they willingly gave away! They believed, through **experience**, that it was the **best bargain** in life to give to God's cause. You certainly got your '**returns**' – and here is the important point - not necessary in kind, but certainly in **value**!

They were **praising** God! Luke is not referring to their Church service when he says here they were praising God! Their **whole life** was one of **praise**! They were **happy**! People **liked** them! Xns should be liked and find **favour with all the people** [47] ie, the general public had no problem with the Xns - it was only the 'authorities' who objected to their practices - like today!!

FOUR MAIN CHARACTERISTICS of a CHURCH

First: *they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching*[42]! Some people think teaching only **causes division**! Other say that as long as you are **sincere**, it doesn't really matter what you believe! Just 'Do your best, harm nobody' is their belief! Not so the Early Church! The Apostles' **teaching** was **central** to their understanding of Truth! It **had** to be sanctioned by an Apostle! Thus the **Church teaches** the Word of **God**, the words of **Christ**, and the words of the **Apostles**! They were **committed** and **loyal** to these **Absolute** Truths!

The **faith** that is so necessary for salvation, *comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ* [Rom 10:17] Paul confirmed the conversion of the Thess *because, when [they] received the word of*

God....[they] *accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, **the word of God*** [1The2:13] Peter: *born again, **not** of perishable seed but...through the living and abiding **word of God*** [1Pet1:2]!

The Word of God is vital to the Church's existence – that is why Paul said *what you have heard from **me** say in the presence of many witnesses **entrust** to **faithful** men who will be able to **teach others*** [2Tim2:2] The Word of God has to be **handed down** to those who are reliable and who will teach others the principles in it. The Bible is the backbone and basis of all Truth and righteousness!

Second characteristic of the Church, ...*and **fellowship*** [42] This is most important. Unless a Church has 'Fellowship' it is not really a Church! Recently someone told me they found a new Church and the teaching was excellent – but the fellowship was awful! After a year, there was no one to whom they could discuss a problem or ask for help! *The Church is a place where **relationships are formed!**

Where like-minded people **can discuss** and **interact** with one another. It is on the basis that they are **united**, not only to one another but also to Christ/God. John invited his readers to have fellowship with him *for our **fellowship** is with the **Father** and with **His Son!*** The Church is **not** a **Private Club** with a special **dress code** The Church is for **all** of God's people whatever their **race** or **culture**.

We are **constituted social** beings and are in **need** of fellowship. The Trinity are in fellowship with each other. We all **need** one another – for **no** man is an **island!** It is sad to see the people of God assemble for worship – then at the end of the service, all to immediately scatter as if we had nothing to do with each other. Thus tea/coffee before and after is so helpful in getting to know and help one another.

Their fellowship meant they met **often**, not just on Sundays! ***day by day attending the temple together*** [46]! Note: the **temple** was **used** every day! The temple was never meant to be used for only one day a week! Same with the Church building! It ought to be used for all types of **charitable purposes!** [Read Deacon's Note!]

Third main characteristic is the **Lord's Supper** *breaking of bread!* [42] This **does** refer to the Lord's Supper as it has the definite article,

whereas in [v46] there is no definite article and therefore there it means a meal! The Salvation Army are not considered a Church because it does not administer the Sacraments (thus Mr Quinn!)

The sacraments are **special** – at least they used to be and our Confession lays a great stress upon them as do the RCs and High C of E! Protestants have **neglected** their importance. Calvin thought the Supper was so important he said it ought to be done **at least once per week!** *as OFTEN as you eat... you proclaim the Lord's death!*

For those who have faith there is a **definite feeding** on Christ Himself! It **is** a feeding ordinance, it is for the **strengthening** of faith! *except you eat the flesh...drink the blood...no life...* Strong language! Of course it is only beneficial to those who have **faith!**

Fourth and the prayers Gr=*the prayers* the definite article & **plural!** There were **several** prayer 'times' for different occasions etc. Prayer played a large part of the '**business**' of the Church! It wasn't just a **part** of their service – there were **specially appointed times** for nothing else but prayer! Remember when Peter was delivered from prison he went to the house of 'Mary the mother of John' and they were all praying - that was a **special** time of prayer for a **particular** cause – his **release!**[12:5+12] From the very beginning in the Upper Room *with one accord...with the women* [1:14] In the next chapter we read *at the hour of prayer* [3:1] was not the Jewish temple time but the New Christians appointed time in the outer courts! One of the loveliest verses in Scripture is: *the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer* [1 Pet 3:12]

All the **above** are the things the Church should engage in: teaching good **doctrine**, having real **fellowship** with one another, dispensing the **sacraments**, regular **prayer** times, the public standing in **awe** of us, performing **good works**, joyfully **sharing** what God has given us, and a life full of **praise!** And if **we** did that – we would be a good church – and **yet** we would be entirely **dependent** on God to give the blessing – for *the LORD added to their number day by day those who were being saved*[47] It is God who changes hearts and adds to the Church!