

Added to Whom?

Church Membership

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What else was I going to say? It was brilliant. I just can't remember. Maybe that's why it escapes me. I don't know. I guess that's it.

So let's take a look at Acts 2 tonight. You might remember week 1 we discussed the first century understanding of the word "church," and last week before our wonderful meal, we discussed the understanding of us being a church, all saved people being a church in Christ. We're all assembled in Christ. We talked about that last week and so this week we're going to take a look at the one and only local church in existence at Pentecost and we'll see if there are any implications for us today, which I would hope there are or this is somewhat vain.

So Acts 2 and so Pentecost. That is a word that means basically a festival of 50. It comes 50 days after the ascension and you take a look at Acts 1 and you might notice in verse 3, can you take a look at verse 3 and tell me how many days transpired between the resurrection of Jesus and the ascension of Jesus back to heaven?

("40.") Yeah, 40 days. So if Pentecost means 50 and it occurs 50 days according to Leviticus after the Sabbath after the Passover, okay that's what Leviticus says, 50 days after the Sabbath after the first day of the week following the Passover. Jesus got up from the dead on that first day of the week following the Passover so that's his resurrection. Pentecost is a festival that came 50 days after that. So if 40 of them transpired and Jesus went to heaven, that leaves how many between his ascension and Pentecost.

("10.") Ten, thank you. Yeah, that's algebra solving for X. I love it.

("Algebra?") Yeah, I'm not sure. Yeah. Yeah. You're solving for X. I don't know. X keeps getting involved and we solve for him.

So ten days between the ascension of Jesus and the descending or the descension of the Holy Spirit. So we have ten days and so when you see in verse 15 of chapter 1, "in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples," and their errand there in the last part of chapter 1 is to do what as you look over it?

("I'm sorry, what was the question?") Their errand is to replace who?

("Judas.") Yup, Judas, according to verse 16. And you find out from verse 17 that he was numbered with the 11 or with the 12. And verse 18, with the money he threw back at the priests, he actually purchased the field indirectly. The priests purchased it but he purchased it with blood money, wages of iniquity.

Let's see here, so you might notice it says in verse 18 that he died in a somewhat gory, his bowels burst open in the middle of a field, and that's interesting, isn't it? So anyway, and that was a fulfillment of Scripture. So you might notice in verse 25, "Judas by transgression fell," from his office, "that he might go to his own place."

So Peter is, again, preaching to the church here. These are Christians. You might notice in verse 15, how do we know? Because he's with, "in the midst of the disciples." And where are they? They are in an upper room. Verse 12, they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. So anyway, you might notice that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is there, end of verse 14. So anyway, a meeting of the church some ten days after the ascension of Jesus and in chapter 2, verse 1, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come."

Okay, so in verse 2, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting." So in the house where they were meeting and praying, there was praying taking place and the Holy Spirit came and the sound of it filled the house and they were all, verse 4, filled with the Holy Spirit. So we see from verse 5, there were lots of people there from, look what it says, "every nation under heaven." Now, you have to decide whether that's figurative or general or if that's literal because in the verses that follow, 16 different ethnicities are there.

Can anyone remember why we have 16 different ethnicities present in Jerusalem right here at Pentecost? Anyone remember?

(unintelligible) Yeah, they were there since Passover. So as you read through Deuteronomy, all male Jews were highly encouraged to be in Jerusalem for three major festivals of the Jews and two of them were in the spring, Pentecost, Passover followed by Pentecost. And since they were only seven weeks apart or so, usually if you made that big journey from Rome, what would you do? You'd just stick around. So these folks are in town, a lot of them male Jews, since Passover, which means they were present when what occurred?

("The crucifixion.") Yeah, when Jesus was killed on what day? Anyone remember? Yeah, but what was the holiday. It was a holiday.

(unintelligible.) Yeah. Yeah. Say again, please? He died on Passover.

("The end of Passover.") No, the beginning of Passover. Passover was an eight day feast. Actually the feast was called the Feast of Unleavened Bread and it began with Passover

proper and the Passover began on the 14th of the month and it continued for eight days and ended with a Sabbath. It began with a Sabbath, ended with a Sabbath, and Jesus was killed on the beginning, on the 14th of the month. So he was the Passover Lamb. It just so happened he was killed on the very day that the Passover Lamb was killed in Israel and so he died on Passover, the very first day of the Passover celebration.

(unintelligible) Yes. It's also why the Jews couldn't kill him because it was a holy day, a holiday, and so they couldn't stone him. It's pretty clear as a lot of people say, "Oh, they couldn't stone anyone." That's not true. They stoned people all the time. If you want an example, look at Stephen, right? So they stoned people all the time and Rome just wanted peace. So why didn't the Jews stone Jesus? They weren't allowed to.

Now think about being so righteous that you want a criminal dead who is guilty of blasphemy, somehow, you're a kangaroo court, you're going to get him dead, dead, dead, dead, dead, but you can't do it because it's a holy day. So they let the Romans do it and the Romans do it by way of what? Stoning? Yeah, the Romans don't stone, Romans don't burn, Romans crucify. And so it just so happened that Jesus is hung on a tree, Deuteronomy 21:20, becomes a curse for us. The only way a person can be a curse is by being hung on a tree according to Deuteronomy 21, and Jesus is hung on a tree only because the Jews cannot kill him that day. So this is God's doing. It fulfills the typology of a Passover lamb dying in Christ and fulfills the requirement of Jesus to be hung on a tree if he's to become a curse. I mean, just perfect planning from our heavenly Father. Perfect planning.

So anyway, these people in verses 5 through 13 are from those nations and they were there. So Peter addresses them in verse 14, he says, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words." So he quotes a verse from verse 17 through 21, he quotes Joel 2, and then he explains it in verses 22 through 24, and then he quotes a Psalm in verses 25 through 28, and then he explains it in verses 29 through 33, and then he quotes another Psalm in verses 34, 35, and then he applies it to them and says in verse 36, "'let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.' Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'"

So you might notice he has people with him. How many according to chapter 1, verse 15? Yeah, about 119 others, maybe, who knows if 120 is a good round number. In any case, 120 or so are a part of this assembly, this ekklesia, that apparently Jesus started because he said, "I will build my ekklesia," and he calls out Peter and Andrew, he calls out James and John, and they assemble around Jesus. Then in chapter 18 of Matthew, he gives them a thing known as church discipline. It's funny that the Lord would say, "Hey, if you guys have a problem with each other, tell it to the church," and the church wasn't even in existence then? Very very very far fetched.

So here we have by definition the beginning of this church. It's here in Jerusalem they're meeting. Are they a church of what we would call today's type of New Testament church? No. For one thing, there's no sign that they have pastors. They have something different called apostles. And here's the reality, as the New Testament goes on, the apostles become less and less because there are way too many churches for there to be an apostle in every church. Not only that, we've discussed several times about Jesus on Sunday morning, the reason he did miracles is what? The reason? Come on, take a stab at it.

(unintelligible) Authenticating. Yeah, the same reason the disciples had miracles, to authenticate new truth. Okay, so, right, who was Jesus supposed to represent or who was Jesus supposed to be like or who was Jesus supposed to remind the reader of?

(unintelligible) Okay, humanly speaking, who was Jesus to remind them of with his miracles?

(unintelligible). Elijah and, we've been learning this on Sunday morning, Moses. Both of them did miracles, right? When you think of the law, you should be thinking of?

("Moses.") When you think of the prophets, you should be thinking of?

("Elijah.") And who do we see on the Mount of Transfiguration? Moses and Elijah. Moses and the prophets there, the law and the prophets on the Mount of Transfiguration. So there are a lot of great patterns in Scripture so Moses is the first author of the Old Testament, right? There is no Old Testament before Moses so Moses comes and he bears witness to his truth by doing miracles. Jesus comes, there is no Matthew, Mark, Luke and John written when Jesus comes, and so he comes with a new covenant or a New Testament. And what does he come doing? Miracles that remind the New Testament audience of the Old Testament Moses and Elijah.

So that's the fundamental reason, as Jack points out, why Jesus did miracles was to remind the reader that he is bringing a new covenant. There are only two covenants: old and new, and Moses is the mediator of the old covenant. He's up on Mount Sinai twice for 40 days, remember, talking to the people on behalf of God and talking to God on behalf of the people. He is the mediator of the old covenant and Jesus says at the Lord's Supper, "This is the new covenant of my blood." Right? He is the Mediator of the new covenant. So you have Moses, mediator of the old covenant; Jesus, Mediator of the new covenant. They both come doing signs because they both come with a new body of truth.

So you have this group of apostles, this group of disciples, this church. There is only one church and so far apparently Luke, who is not here, we don't have any evidence that Luke is here, but behold, he is the author. Okay? And for some reason, the author of Acts felt it necessary to tell you how many people were meeting already in the Upper Room. We've gone from 12 to 120 in how long? About ten days. That's not to say that there weren't other people besides the disciples following Jesus around. Remember, if he wanted free

food, he could have had how many? Yeah, 5,000. If you want to give out free food, you know, pot lucks bring lots of people, right? And especially if you don't have to bring the pot.

So Jesus provides the 12 baskets. Jesus is the pot luck cook and there is plenty of food and plenty of people. He wants to whittle it down to disciples to go out and do signs, he finds 70. When he wants apostles to be sent out by him and to understand truth, he finds 12. When he wants to find people for a prayer meeting, Peter, James and John are the only ones. When he wants to find one that will follow him to the cross, there is just one, his name is John. So the higher the commitment, the smaller the group.

So here we have 120 in the Upper Room and you might notice that they start speaking in tongues in verse 4 of chapter 2, and in verse 13, they're accused of being drunk. And Peter says in verse 15 of chapter 2, "It's way too early to be drunk. Give us time." The Shamrock Shakes were amazing at that time of day, apparently. I have consumed alcohol only twice and both of them were accidental. One of them was behind an eggnog ice cream in Germany and I want you to know, it really cleared my sinuses. So I am pretty sure that in some parts of the world, Shamrock Shakes are for late night consumption only. But anyway...I'll tell you, it cleaned my sinuses right out. Then the other one was at Texas. I think I had a roadhouse tea, how hard could that be, right? A tea. A tea. So I took a big old swig of that and, I mean, my eyes started to water and it was just amazing. A real experience. I mean, an emotional spiritual experience there. So your pastor knows how to live it wild, doesn't he? Sometimes I get extra espresso in my coffee too. I'm just living on the wild side.

So at the end of his sermon when he basically incriminates everyone who's there, in verse 40, it's Pentecost and Peter says in verse 40, "with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.'" Now, he's not doing this with a PA. I think it was Dot M. asked me if I ever get hoarse yelling like that. Well, first of all, I don't mean to yell so much but the truth is, I just want everyone to hear me well and I think it happens. But here's a guy that's delivering a message to more than 3,000, alright? And somehow there is no quartet, no piano, no hymnbooks and no PA so it's impressive, to say the least.

Verse 41, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added," and then if you have a Bible like mine, it's in italics, "to them." Now that doesn't mean that you shouldn't have "to them" in it. Who has italicized words "to them"? Okay, thank you. That means that in the Greek language behind those two words there are no Greek words but the Greek word behind "added" implies because it's in what we would call the dative...forget it. The point is it's supposed to be there in translation but behind it in the Greek there are no static word-for-word equivalents.

Be that as it may, they are added to somebody so we have to finish the sentence, added to who? Added to the number that's meeting in the Upper Room, 120. Or at least the disciples because you see in Acts 2:14, Peter standing up with the 11. So at least these

3,000 are added to the 11 but probably added to the 120 which contains the 11. So I just want us to notice here that this idea, if you have a study Bible, and man, I'm so thankful for study Bibles, but some study Bibles have it just as wrong as it can be when they say that the church began on Pentecost. We can say many things but we don't have the ability to say that the ekklesia that Jesus said he was going to build isn't built until he's gone. Okay? Now there are some ways we can play with that, talk about the Spirit of Christ working in the ekklesia and it's Jesus doing it, he's the head, I get that. But how natural are those church references in the Gospel of Matthew if they don't even exist or have an application for another year or two when Jesus dies, rises again, goes to heaven and then Acts 2 happens. So consider this. Are you all ready?

(unintelligible) I'm sorry about that. That's why we're recording it. It's wonderful.

So when the tabernacle is produced by Moses and the craftsman there in the wilderness, remember when it was completed in the last chapter of Exodus? Do you remember what happened to that tabernacle when it was set up?

("God came down.") Matt, what did you say?

(unintelligible) Yeah, he descended on it and smoke filled the tabernacle, Exodus 40 says. So the Spirit of God moves down, fills the tabernacle as a sign that God will now appear to the world through Israel, specifically the tabernacle of Israel.

Then they have a place they call home and David has a dream that he wants to build a house for God. He says, "I have this beautiful house. I want to build a house." Remember, the Lord shows up to him and says, "You're better known for death. Why don't you just gather the materials and we'll let your son build the house?" So Solomon builds the temple. He takes seven years to do it. He takes 13 years to build his own palace, seven years to build the house of God. And during the dedication of the temple which is supposed to be, he says in his own prayer in 2 Chronicles 7 where we usually pull verse 14 out around May 1st or so, right, whenever the National Day of Prayer is, "And if my people which are called by my name," that's right in the middle of the dedication prayer for Solomon's temple. Solomon prayed that and God responded with verse 14 that I just quoted. But Solomon, after he prays and God responds, what happens to the temple?

(unintelligible) Say again? Yeah, the same thing that happens to the tabernacle, it's filled with the presence of God. It says that the Holy Spirit was basically so thick that the priests couldn't even stay in the temple to minister, okay?

So now God is going to minister to the world through a new house, a spiritual house. So instead of a tent, instead of a building, now it's a group of people, alright? And on Pentecost the Holy Spirit fills the group of people called the church. So just like David gathered the materials for Solomon to build the house of God, well, where did Jesus get his disciples? John 1 tells us. Someone who's got the first Gospel of John. Where did Jesus get the first several of his disciples anyway?

(unintelligible) They were fishers but they also were John the Baptist's disciples. So Jesus got several of his own body of disciples from John the Baptist.

So work with me here on this parallel. King David gathers the materials. Solomon builds the house. The Holy Spirit fills the house. John the Baptist gathers some materials. Jesus builds the house. The Holy Spirit fills the house. Do you see that parallel? This is a wonderful book from Genesis to Revelation. Just amazing these parallels. As you read cover to cover, you notice them more and more and it's just fantastic.

So here you have 3,000, Acts 2:41, being added to a "them." Verse 42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship," we have two couplets, "in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." So doctrine, that's teaching. Fellowship. Breaking of bread which could be shorthand for what? Breaking of bread. Yeah, pot luck or communion. And there are good godly people on both sides of that debate, okay? There are people that, "No, that's absolutely communion." It might be. It might also be a pot luck. Breaking of bread, let's just be honest, is shorthand for eating, okay? So I don't want to be a bully about just telling you which it is. I don't think we can be clear on that. I could be wrong but from what I've come across so far, I don't think you can be clear, "That's definitely the Lord's Supper." It might just be sharing food. And in prayers. So teaching, fellowship, either communion or enjoying food together and prayers. So who? Who? Who is doing this?

(unintelligible) Yeah, the ekklesia made up of at least 3,120 people. By the way, if you go to the end of day ten, that's pretty good growth, right? I mean, we're talking about 12 to 3,120 with one sermon.

("Is that only counting the men as they usually did in the Bible?") Well, I would say it is not intended to be just counting the men, and the reality is, oh this is fantastic, the reality is the reason that they often only count men is because only men are present. So for example, we talk about the feeding of people, and people say, "Well, both feedings, both of the 4,000 and the 5,000 were men plus women and children." Well, the reality is only one of those miracles was plus women and children. One of them really was just men because they were on a pilgrimage and the closer you got to Jerusalem, the more gatherings you found of Jewish men on their way back in the spring of the year for Passover and Pentecost. So why would we say that this primarily male church membership?

(unintelligible) Yeah, because they are mostly male Jewish attenders or travelers. But I don't think that's the intent of the language here is to exclude women, it just so happens that a great majority of these under these 16 nations listed in verses 5 through 12 are mostly traveling men. Mostly traveling men.

("But we do know there are women because they listed...") Yeah, that's right. That's right. There were all kinds of women that followed Jesus during his ministry even. Luke 8:1 and 2 list them, a good many of them. Some of them as close as the chamberlain of

Herod, if memory serves. A chamberlain of Herod was following Jesus around. That's bold.

But anyway, in chapter 2, verse 41, notice how often they're meeting. Verse 42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." Now let's stop there. There are a lot of enthusiastic churches out there that want this kind of thing happening: tongues speaking and miracles. But don't forget the reason why we have tongues speaking and miracles, it is because there is no New Testament Scripture, only a New Testament message.

So why do you believe this guy? Hopefully it's because I give you the Bible. Well, if we're talking 2,000 years ago, I don't have a New Testament to preach to you so why should you believe me? Because I'm going to reach over here and make Rolf 30 years old. That's why. I'm going to do a miracle and I'm going to reach up and cure my own baldness.

("I don't think any of those miracles were in there.") Shoot. Maybe so.

So fear, a lot of people say they want Pentecostal power but do you want Pentecostal fear? Do you realize that in just a few short chapters, people are dying in church services from lying? Is that something we want back? Better think carefully before you start asking for Acts power in the church. You know, a lot of people say, "I want some of the power of the Old Testament prophets." You are nuts. Do you have any idea? Ezekiel laid on his side for 3 ½ years and cooked his food over cow dung. You sure you want part of that? Alright so, let's be real careful when we start talking about what kind of Bible experiences we want, alright.

("It says here that wonders and signs were done, though, through the apostles.") Yes. ("It wasn't done by any other people.") That's true. I think that's primarily true. I think that there...and that's really, you might...now you don't remember because I think about it, I suppose, because I'm the one preaching it, but in 2 Corinthians 12:12, Paul says, "I had the signs of an apostle." So these signs were indicative of the office of the apostle. So when you drive up and down these roads and you have Jericho, tabernacle, praise, house of worship and the Holy Ghost pastored by apostle and Mrs. Apostle, you know, Bert and Gert, alright let's get them up to the hospital to heal people if they're apostles. It seems easy enough, right? And then let's see the new body of Scripture they're bringing to us. Do you see what I'm saying? So if you want a good reason of why these miracles disappeared until 1904 with an Azusa Street prayer meeting out there where the Pentecostals got their jump start in California, I mean, 1,900 years of no miracles? We should be really suspicious about why they're back, you know? Maybe they really disappeared for a reason. Maybe it's because the last apostle died. Do you see what I'm saying? Those things go hand-in-hand. A completed New Testament means that the preacher has less to prove when he preaches it so he has less miracles to perform to validate what he's saying.

Again, put it up against Moses. Moses goes up against the children of Israel, convincing the elders of the children of Israel that he's called by God to lead them out of Egypt, why should they believe him? There is no Genesis or Exodus to believe and read. They are living Exodus and he hasn't recorded Genesis yet, right? And if Job is in existence, it's nowhere in a Hebrew's hand traveling through Egypt. So what are you going to do, Moses? "Well, I can turn my hand leprous. What do you think about that? I can get my stick to turn into a snake. What do you think about that? I can turn this river into blood. How do you feel about that?" So you see that there is an entirely good explanation of miracles and why we Baptist folk don't necessarily believe that they are for the normative church practice. Do you see what I'm doing there? I'm leaving the door open for God to do whatever he wants. But you need to know that the reason that they were in the first century is because we have an entire body of Scripture that's about to be written in a matter of decades.

Any questions about that? Okay. Comments? Disagreements? How about a disagreement? Go ahead.

("If what somebody's saying as a preacher on tv is, 'I have a new revelation,' I have a problem with that because it isn't in chapter 22.") Right and yet we have a forecast that there's going to be a real miracle worker at the end of days and he's going to convince lots of folk because he's coming with a new body of truth. We're talking about the beast in the book of Revelation. So the miracle hungry will have their miracle worker in the end of days. They sure will.

("If that's all they're looking for is the sign because the miracles somehow or another are the sign, right, for the beast?") Well, the sign of the beast we're told by both Jesus and Paul is that he'll sit in the temple of God claiming to be God, the abomination that makes desolate. But Revelation tells us that he will come with deceivableness and all powers and wonders and signs.

("And what you're saying is people are going to follow him because they want to see signs.") Yeah. Sure. Sure. Yeah, okay, good point then. My apologies. Thank you.

Verse 44, "all who believed were together, and had all things in common." Do you get the idea here that these people are meeting regularly? Right?

They "sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need." Now how do you do that if you're not meeting regularly? How do 3,100 people share their possessions if they never see each other?

("In different homes.") Okay, sure, and notice how they do this in verse 46, "continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house." Now maybe you have a background like mine but there was a day when I was guilt tripped into knocking on doors for soul winning because of this verse but you notice this is not a verse for finding lost people at their front doors. This is a verse for proving to you that 3,120 people met in a lot of different houses every day, okay?

("So, I don't want to be nit-picking....") I like nit-picking, go ahead. ("The 3,100 people, was that counted after....Pentecost happened when there were all kinds of Jews from all kinds of nations, those Jews are not going to stick around in houses.") Yeah, a lot of them did. ("For how long?") Well, I don't know but if you'll take a look in chapter 4 and look at verse 4, "However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." Now we are one or two chapters later and there are 5,000 believers in Jerusalem. So I don't know how quickly they left town but this could be...once we get to chapter 8, there's a horrible persecution thanks to who? Paul. Paul. Think about Paul the apostle. Think about how he is doing world evangelism as an unsaved man through persecution. Then he gets saved and he does world evangelism as a saved man through preaching. It's magnificent. God is using Paul even before he's saved because he tells in Acts 1:8, "Go to the uttermost parts of the earth," and they hang around until chapter 8, verse 1, when Saul, soon to be Paul, regularly known as Paul, is making havoc of the church in chapter 8, verse 3, mostly in the regions of Judea and Samaria. That's why I tell you the book of Acts is just genius because you keep seeing these things show up and Luke, you have 30 or 40 years of church history recorded here and he shares only what we need to know and it is magnificent. It's beautiful.

So we get to chapter 2, verse 46, how often did these 3,000+ believers meet? Daily. And where did they meet? Publicly in the temple because that was a huge place. Big old place. The top of the mountain that Herod took 40 years to flatten basically with one platform, right? A house of prayer for all nations is what Jesus called it.

And they also broke "bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added," now I have in my Bible and some of you won't have it in yours, "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." And now you can see why I am pretty bodacious about saying the church was already existent because this verse says it did, if you have my version of the Bible. If you have a King James, if you have a New King James, I don't think the ESV has it, I don't know if the NASB has it. The reality is that that's a conversation for a different kind but there have been many translation committees that believe church belongs in chapter 2, verse 47. Again, I'll read it from my version, "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." So I understand already that some of your versions of the Bible don't have that and, again, that should tell you that differences in translation do matter. It doesn't affect doctrine. Okay, here's a great example of how it does.

("I think the NIV says the church.") I'm not sure. Does anyone have an NIV? Does it have church in there?

("Added to their number.") Added daily.

So let's take a look at number 2 and we'll take questions in just a minute. We'll help you fill in some blanks here. A church is when the local body of Christ recognizes a person as a Christian. A person is a Christian. You're like, "Wait, wait, wait. How do you get that

from the text?" Well, chapter 1, verse 15, it should be pretty clear that if you weren't a disciple, you would not be in the Upper Room with the other Christians, yeah? Now I'm not saying, brothers and sisters, pay attention please, I'm not saying they were called Christians here because they were not yet called Christians. Being called a Christian was a derogatory term and they were given it in chapter, I believe it is 11. The Christians were called, believers were called Christians first at Antioch. I believe it's Acts 11:40 or something. I don't know. Now I need to look. It's verse 26.

So no one is being called a Christian yet as far as we can tell but they are called followers of Christ. They are recognized as Christ followers, so if that makes you feel better, put Christ follower in the first blank, although I doubt it's long enough.

In Acts 2:37-47, there are several characteristics that are demonstrated by those who are in the same church. Remember, there's one body of believers so this is the very most simple way to see what a church is, is look at the one and only church in existence at the time. So there are several characteristics that are demonstrated by those who are in the same church. First, a person must, what verse 38? Repent and be baptized. Yes. So they weren't added to the church before they were baptized, they weren't added to the church instead of being baptized, they were added to the church because they were baptized. Did y'all get that?

Let's take a look at it again. Look at verse 41, "those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." So again, let's consider this as what we've been shown and taught in our days when, "Alright, we're going to have an invitation. If anyone would like to be saved, come down here and chat with the preacher or chat with one of these altar workers or office workers, whatever. Altar workers, and if you'd like to make a profession of faith, come on down here and let's make a profession of faith. Or if you'd like to be baptized, we'll have someone speak to you about baptism." You see, what we've done there is we've added something that doesn't belong, it's that strange thing we call a profession of faith. What is the New Testament profession of faith? Baptism. How do you show that you receive the word, verse 41? You were baptized.

So we start understanding the function of baptism when we get all the other junk out of the way, right? Nehemiah says, "I could build a house once we got the rubbish out of the way." And sometimes we have to talk about what the truth ain't before we can talk about what it is and the truth is, you don't get saved by being baptized but you also don't make a profession of faith without being baptized. You don't get saved by being baptized but you don't make a profession of faith without being baptized. Furthermore, you're not added to the church until you are baptized. It's as plain as this big German nose on my face.

Second, an individual must affirm the same core, what of the Bible? Now we're getting this from that word "apostles' doctrine," right? So same core doctrine of the Bible. Okay, let's work through this. Why did they call it the apostles' doctrine? There wasn't a Bible to read. So Jesus Christ is the risen Lamb. He was raised from the dead. He is at the right hand of God right now. How do you know that? Well, look at him, he just healed the

sick. Talk about the apostles, the apostles' signs accompanied the apostles' doctrine. Why did you believe the apostles' doctrine, verse 41 and 42? Because you had apostolic signs in verse 43. So it's called the apostles' doctrine.

Today we have no apostles but the apostles' doctrine is written down for us in the New Testament and so instead of me impressing you or Brother Walter or Brother Rick or any of the other able teachers in this room, instead of us gaining your confidence by doing miracles, we gain your confidence by being true to the New Testament.

Third, the believer will both --- in and out of church with other believers. What do you think that word is? Fellowship, or as they say in some parts of the country, fellership. I'm learning.

(unintelligible) More comfortable. And they don't have hollows, it's not the Legend of Sleepy Hollow, it's the Legend of Sleepy Holler. That's right. I'm getting it. I'm getting it.

So third, the believer will fellowship both in and out of church with other believers as well as, what for them? Pray for them. Yes.

So this is a consistent thing and, brothers and sisters, it's not just Sunday, okay? They're continuing in the apostles' doctrine and we are led to believe that it happens, verse 46, daily. We should have no mystery as to why we as, not our church of course, why we as so many churches in America know almost nothing about our Bibles. They were meeting daily to go over the apostles' doctrine and we're happy to get half our membership out for one hour on a Sunday morning. We should not be mystified. That's why we don't have any issues having a worship service, Bible study, Bible study in the evening, Bible study on Wednesday night before prayer time. We encourage Bible study and hopefully if I didn't make that clear this morning, I am all for Bible study. I didn't learn what I learned in the Bible by accident or tripping or sleeping on a Bible. I read my Bible so I'm all for studying the Bible. So I think we need to realize that a major reason why we don't have the power or the fire of the first century church is because we don't study the apostles' doctrine like they did. It's not because of the miracles.

Alright, so any questions on that? I have a few more blanks to help us fill out before our time is concluded.

(unintelligible) Well, that's impressive. I don't know how you did that. Any other questions about what we've talked about tonight? Again, affirmations or disagreements are allowed. If you want me to explain something or you want to at least get me to admit that I don't know something, feel free to ask a real stunner. I don't mind. Make me study.

("I've got one for you. Back when Jesus was crucified, back in those days, did they consider their time 24 hours in a day back then or how did they do their hourly days?") How did they do their hourly days? ("Did they have 24 hours in the day back then?") Yes. I will answer that in three minutes, okay?

Look down under number 3 and look at the third one. Looking back, we're looking at number 3: is church membership biblical? We're looking down at the third question. Looking back to Acts 2:37-41, we see that there is a, what record of those who believed on Christ? I heard something back there. Numerical, that will work. Yup, numerical record. The church at Jerusalem was keeping a record of growth or a recording of growth.

Now to be fair, I don't think it was so that they could have their egos pumped up. By the way, this morning we had the largest crowd since I've been here. I really appreciate the Lord being so kind to us to give us a good number. But we're far more concerned about people that are being helped and touched in the building more than just building a crowd. Jesus is building a church here. If we wanted to build a crowd, we could figure out a way to do that. I mean, we could have activity's coordinators and we could have Binky on the bus, and we could have hot dogs at a bowling alley. We could do all kinds of things if we wanted to. I mean, we could have baptism drives and festivals and, you know, just a good old time and you could actually have a good preacher and we could build a crowd, but we're trying to build a church. So we're really interested in doing the things that...

I've got to tell you a story. So I was preaching at a preachers' fellowship when I was newly married, so that would make me 20 or 21, because there is my first wife over there. And I was preaching at a preachers' fellowship and I quoted about every verse I could think of for about 20 minutes and I said everything that was wise that I could think of and that took, really not more than 15 minutes probably. And I preached everything and I was trying to get people to say amen and everything and I went and had a seat and I thought, "Boy, I really set the tone. That was really something. I think that they're all very happy with the way I preached." And then another pastor got up behind me and Pastor Ted Everly, he's like 70 years old and he went up there and he just preached and, you know, the Holy Spirit fell, everything dripped off his words. I mean, it was like you were reading a book. It was fantastic. Wonderful. And he shared one verse, wept a little bit, had a seat. The third preacher got up, Mike Robinson was his name, and he said, "Well, Brother Sturm, let that be a lesson to you." And I was waiting for the lesson. He said, "You can pull more weight in a lower gear." So we're going to pull lots of weight, brothers and sisters, so we've got to stay in a low gear, alright. Low gear, sister. Low gear.

("Does that only compare to the speed of light?") No, sir. No, sir.

So let's flip to the back of our page. We're making some ground here. We've filled in all of number 2, some of number 3 and now we're going to fill in all of number 5 and then that will leave the rest for next week and the week after.

So Acts 2:4-47 of number 5. Those who are added to the church had first, we should be looking at verse 41 of Acts 2 for this answer, received his word and then were baptized. The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. So a person must profess Christ as Savior and then, of course, be baptized to be entered into the membership of the church.

So all I want you to see is that as early as Pentecost, there was a group of people that were understood to be a part of the believer-hood and people were added to that. Does that prove that we should have an official church roll? Not necessarily but it proves that there was an established expectation that all Christians meet regularly, even daily. Yes? So I'm not going to crank it up, we're not going to have seven days a week service. Don't worry. Please, don't worry, but what I am trying to get us to see is that there was an expectation.

There were no three groups of people in the New Testament: unsaved, saved but not really in church, and saved and right with God and in church. No, that's crazy. It was a lost person who does everything you would expect a lost person to do, and a saved person and everything you would expect a saved person to do. There weren't three groups, brothers and sisters. A Christian who can't find enough Christianity to be faithful to a church shouldn't expect enough Christianity to find themselves in heaven. "I don't like that." Well, look at your New Testament and find the first book written to a not church member. Find a Christian in the New Testament who is being treated as if he's part of that middle crowd. Galatians, "To the churches of Galatia." Corinthians, "To the church of God in Corinth." Ephesians, "To the church at Ephesus." Over and over and over and over again, brothers and sisters, you're going to have a very hard time. Even James written to the 12 tribes scattered abroad. What does he say in chapter 2? "If there comes in a man in your assembly," I mean, he talks about the assembly...you get the idea. How about 1 John? Not written to a particular church but he says, "If they've gone out from you, it means they were never a part of you, for if they were a part of you, they never would have stopped being with you." Walter taught that back in July. So we know that that's just a fable.

Now, the question about the hours during the time of Jesus, particularly as it pertains to the crucifixion. Let's take a look at Mark 13 together and then I'm going to see if I answered your question, Randy, and if not, we'll take another stab at it.

Mark 13, look at verse 32. We're going to talk about the coming of Jesus but it, by the way, answers a question that I think we're talking about: how do they account for particular hours of the day? So take a look at Mark 13:32, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming," and he gives you four options. When does a thief come? "In the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning, lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" So at the nighttime, there were not considered as we would consider 12 hours of darkness or 10 hours of darkness, there were considered four watches and each watch was labeled after the event that ended the watch.

So you might notice, for example, the second watch is called what? Verse 35, midnight. So that ends when? Yup, midnight. Top of the night. So at midnight. At the crowing of the rooster.

(unintelligible) I'm afraid not, dear sister. There are four watches in the night.

(unintelligible) Which is exactly why the crowing of the cock is at 2 or 3. The crowing of the rooster is at 2 or 3 in the morning. Yup, Sister Sue and I were talking about this just the other day.

("I had an early riser when I was a kid. He was up at 2, always at 2.") Now you know why there was approximately one hour between Peter's second denial and third denial, because the rooster crows at 2 and 3, depending on what kind of rooster, apparently. I learned that from my Bible.

So that's the night. They didn't have hours at night but during the day, let's look at Matthew 22. During the day, there were not four watches, although I think I might have said that to someone recently. I didn't mean to say it. There were not four watches during the day. There were, however, four watches at night called evening, midnight, cock crowing or rooster crowing, and morning. So in other words, when you read in your New Testament "in the morning," you should be thinking morning watch getting done around sun up or 6 o'clockish which, I have to tell you, I think it's incredibly funny that we're having a sunrise service 40 minutes after the sun comes up. But anyway...

So Matthew 22. Yeah, we want people here. I heard what you were thinking. So Matthew 22 gives us a proof that the days were accounted differently. Jesus tells a story and he says in verse 2, "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants..." Wrong, look at chapter 20. Forgive me. It's a good passage, though.

So chapter 20, look at verse 1, "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth." So he goes out right away in the morning in verse 1 and 2, and then in verse 3 he goes out the third hour, then in verse 5, he goes out the sixth hour, "and the ninth hour." Verse 6, "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.'" So there's a proof that there are probably 12 one hour intervals during the Jewish day and then John 1 also gives a reference to the tenth hour of the day.

So it looks like, based on what I see in the passages of Scripture, is that the night was divided into four watches, probably built around the four watches of city guards provided

by the Roman garrison in Jerusalem. And it appears that the days were split into 12 hours. Now is that anything even close to your question? Okay, good. Thank the Lord.

Are there any other questions or comments? Disagreements?

("Would you mind saying the three at night again?") Mark 13:35 provides for us four watches: evening, midnight, rooster crowing and morning.

Any others? Alright, well let's pray, then. No other questions at all?

Let's have prayer.

Biblical Perspective on Church Membership



1. What is the church?

The church is “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into a public place, an assembly”¹ Acts 19 provides the only times (of the 118) where this Greek word is mentioned in a context other than “religious,” and we see it is either a mob (19:32) or a lawful, governing, local body (19:39, 41). One begins to really see what the disciples would have expected when they heard this word used by the Lord (Matthew 16:18).

I Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 1:22-23 tell us that the church is the Body of Christ and is made up of individual members. Revelation 21.1-9 and Ephesians 5:21-32 show us the “great mystery” is that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it as his Bride.

Ephesians 1:10 provides a “called out assembly” understanding in that all believers are “assembled” in Christ—even now—in Heaven (Ephesians 1:20; 2:6)

2. What is church membership?

A church is when the local body of Christ recognizes a person as a believer.² In Acts 2:37-47 there are several characteristics that are demonstrated by those who are in the same church. First a person must repent and be baptized. Second, an individual must affirm the same core doctrines of the Bible. Third, the believer will fellowship, both in and out of the church with other believers, as well as pray for them.

3. Is church membership biblical?

(Hebrews 13:17) As Christians we are to submit ourselves to the A_____ over us. If there is no local church membership then who do we know to obey?³ Also, if there is no local body of believers for whom is the pastor responsible?⁴ Since the believer is to submit to an elder, and the elder is responsible for certain souls, the believer must be a part of a local church body.

(I Timothy 5:17) We see that the elders who _____ well deserve double honor. If that be the case, how can a believer know if an elder is “worthy of double honor” is they have not “submitted” to his pastoral oversight.

(Acts 2:37-41) We see that there is a numerical record of those who have believed on Christ. The church at Jerusalem was keeping a record of growth.

1 Timothy 5:3-16, in this passage there are specific requirements to be met if the church is to support a W_____ financially. How would the church support specific widows if they did not have a prioritized list that would stem from the members of a local body of believers?

¹ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *ekklēsia* (Strong's 1577)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 23 Oct 2012. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G1577&t=KJV> >

² Jonathan Leeman, Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus (Crossway, Wheaton Illinois, 2012), 29.

³ Is Church Membership Biblical; Matt Chandler, www.9marks.org/journal/church-membership-biblical

⁴ Ibid.

Turning over to Romans 16:1-16 the reader will see there is a distinct body of believers in Rome that are in churches that Paul knows. The amount of knowledge Paul has of these Christians is a clear example that these people are members of a s_____ body that serve there, and have served for a length of time that has made them of honorable mention.

4. Why should I be a member?

As a member I can have an active role in the d_____ of the church by the ability to vote in a congregational form of government. I will be able to be known as a member of that church (1 Corinthians 5:7). Looking at 1 Corinthians 5.1-12 the reader can see sin in the church which Paul deals with. The membership of the church is subject to D_____ from the church. A “brother” cannot be put *out*, if there is not a specific *in* to which he belongs.

I will be better fitted for S_____ (Acts 6:1-7).

Being a member places more credibility upon a person who has a desire to work in a particular ministry making me an active part in the E_____ or growth of the church (Ephesians 4.11-12).

As a member I will help the B_____ work properly (Ephesians 4.15-16). I will have the added blessing of being held

A_____ for my actions (Ephesians 4.25).

The church will look after the needs of W_____ (1 Timothy 5.1-3).

Now that we have seen the advantages of membership, let’s look as the disadvantages of not being a member.

1 Peter 5.1-5. If I am not a member that means I am not under the numbered F_____ of an under-shepherd or pastor to be looked after. This means I will miss out on the feeding of that flock as well as the careful watching of that shepherd. The under-shepherd will have to give an account to the Great Shepherd for the flock he has been given the oversight of; he needs to know who his sheep are. How can a shepherd know when one of his sheep is missing if he does not know which sheep do not belong to him?

5. What are the biblical requirements for church membership?

Acts 2.4-47. Those who were added to the church had first “received his word” and then were “baptized.” The Lord “added” to the church daily those who were “saved.” A person must profess Christ as their Savior through baptism to be entered into the membership of the church.