

What Kind of Church?¹

Acts 2:36-47; 4:32-35

Introduction:

What kind of church would you like?

If you could have whatever kind of church you want, what would you choose?

We all have preferences, acknowledge it or not we have likes and dislikes about the church we attend.

People change churches because they no longer like the kind of church they are in.

There are things that every Bible believer wants in the kind of church they are looking for.

We want a place where we fit in; whether single, a couple, or a family with children.

We want to be accepted, feel welcomed, and loved.

We want to be given grace, also opportunities to serve and help.

We want a church where we can be spiritually fed and challenged, but not put down.

Bible believers want the church Christ established.

People searching for a church home want the church Christ established.

This invites an obvious question; what kind of church did Christ establish?

The only place to find out what kind of church Christ established is in the New Testament.

The New Testament gives the pattern for the best, most efficient church one can be part of today.

If the New Testament pattern is followed, we will be part of the church Christ established, the one He wants us to like—even love, and the one that ministers to our true needs.

I. The New Testament Church Was a Church Belonging to Christ (vv. 36-41)

Each Christian recognized the church as Christ's: His body, His bride, His building.

Paul said in Ephesians 1:22 and 23, "He (speaking of God) put all things in subjection under His (speaking of Christ's) feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His (again, Christ's) body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

In Colossians 1:18 succinctly states "He (Christ) is also head of the body, the church."

Galatians 3:27 explains how we get in Christ, to be His body. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Verse 28 expresses "For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

The next verse shares the true and certain fact that we "belong to Christ" if we have clothed ourselves with Christ and are one in Him.

Ephesians 5:22-33 explains how marriage is like Christ and the church.

The church submits to Christ (vv. 22-24).

Christ proved He loves the church by dying for the church (v. 25).

He now lives to make the church holy and clean (v. 26).

¹ Burris Butler, [*Sermon Outlines on Christian Living*](#), Sermon Outline Series (Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 1962), 47-48.

He will someday present the church to himself as a glorious church without any stain or wrinkle (v. 27).

Christ said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18).

The apostle Peter said, we “As living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

We all look to Christ, “For we (church leaders like Paul and Apollos) are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

In every figure referring to the church, Christ is pre-eminent:

We are the sheep; Christ is the shepherd. In John 10:11-16 Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”

In verses fourteen and fifteen, Jesus noted, “I am the good shepherd” who knows my sheep and my sheep know me.

In verse sixteen, Jesus says that He has other sheep, which He must bring together into “one flock with one shepherd.”

Jesus the Christ brings the sheep together into one fold because He is “the door of the sheep” (John 10:7) and “if anyone enters through [Him] he will be saved” (John 10:9).

Concerning the figure of servant and master, Jesus said, “If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:26).

The church recognized the authority of Jesus: and also, the authority of His divinely appointed apostles.

The apostles taught what they had been taught by Jesus.

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth,” Jesus said in Matthew 28:18.

Therefore, the apostles were making “disciples of all the nations, baptizing them (in the name of Jesus Christ a part stated for the whole) in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

The people who received the word in Acts 2:41 were baptized, then continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching (v. 42) they were taught to “observe all that [Jesus] commanded.”

The members appreciated the price with which they were bought—the precious blood of Christ.

The blood of Christ purchased—meaning obtained, acquired—the church (Acts 20:28).

Those sheep Jesus was going to bring together with His other sheep (John 10:16), were “brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).

Peter showed that we were “redeemed...with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:17-19).

II. The Church in the New Testament Was a Big Church (v. 41)

Jesus explained the kingdom of God to be “like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES” (Luke 13:18-19).

The church grew in size.

Since the church is the people in the body of Christ and the bride of Christ, they operated on a large scale.

They increased from 120 (Acts 1:15) to about three thousand members in one day. Shortly afterward, the church grew so that “the number of men came to be about five thousand” (Acts 4:4).

Acts 5:14, “And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number.”

Acts 6:1, “the disciples were increasing in number.”

Acts 6:7, “the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem.”

III. The New Testament Church Was a Growing Church (v. 47)

Acts 2:47 sums up the growth of the early church very well.

The believers had the mindset, attitude, and work ethic to grow.

The believers were praising God, extolling the greatness of God.

The church grew in having favor from the community; the people of Jerusalem liked the believers.

The group grew in numbers: added, multiplied.

“A great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered...except the apostles” (8:1).

“Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word” (8:4).

Acts 9:31, “...and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”

“So then those who were scattered because of the persecution...made their way to [distant areas] speaking the word...” (11:19).

Acts 16:5, “So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.”

From a view of the world, the church is still growing, increasing, adding, and multiplying “day by day.”

IV. The New Testament Church Was a Steadfast Church (v. 42)

They continued in the apostles’ teaching; the disciples, the believers, kept learning from the apostles as they taught and instructed about “the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

They continued in fellowship, being together, sharing in activities like the other three mentioned in this verse, and partnering together in common life.

They continued in the breaking of bread or the sharing of the Lord’s Supper.

They continued in the prayers of the Christian community and the Jewish prayers at specific hours.

The worship activities of the church show the believers were constant, persistent, loyal, and committed.

V. The New Testament Church Was a Praying Church (v. 42)

The church was born in prayer.

Jesus prayed “for those...who believe in [Him] through [the apostles’] word” (John 17:20).

In the upper room, about one hundred and twenty persons “were continually devoting themselves to prayer” (Acts 1:14).

The apostles prayed seeking God’s will regarding the electing of Matthias to apostleship (Acts 1:24-26).

The new Christians were steadfast in prayer (Acts 2:42).

The apostles were allowed to “devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” when an issue arose in Acts 6:4.

Readers continue to encounter the church’s devotion to prayer in Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians.

The church prayed instead of grumbling to deal with problems (Acts 4:23-31).

While Peter, alone, was in prison, the church prayed (Acts 12:12).

Paul and Silas prayed and sang in prison (Acts 16:25).

The prayers of the early church were:

Relevant—for the need at hand.

Reverent—for the God who blessed them with answered their prayers.

Definite—clear and precise.

VI. The New Testament Church Was a Giving Church (vv. 44-45; 4:32-37)

They considered themselves, as if they were in fact, only stewards of their possessions.

“There was not a needy person among them” because the believers freely shared their possessions or sold them and shared the proceeds with each other.

They provided for the ministry laying the proceeds, “at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.”

They looked after one another.

VII. The Church of the New Testament Was an Evangelistic Church (v. 47)

They were gaining favor with the people.

They understood and acted upon the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Gospel message and the immediate example of the new Christians being devoted and living according to the New Testament teachings as they are being taught them, fueled the church mindset, attitude, work ethic, commitment, prayers, giving, and evangelism.

Application:

As you can see, the New Testament church was dynamic!

You can be part of the church that Christ established by obeying His teachings passed on through the apostles.

The Book of Acts talks about several people who were converted to Christ, added by Him to the church, and functioned like the kind of church people want to be part of today.

The story of each person’s conversion includes different details, but the instructions they needed to follow stayed the same.

Each conversion follows the pattern found in our passage today.

“When they heard this” (v. 37), the message about Jesus being both Lord and Christ (vv.14-36, especially note verse 36), they were affected.

They believed what they heard for “They were pierced to the heart (convicted in conscience) and said... ‘What shall we do?’” (v. 37).

“Peter said to them, ‘Repent’” change your heart and mind about Jesus Christ and how you live (v. 38).

With a changing heart and mind, they could confess or acknowledge, declare for certain that “God has made...this Jesus whom [they] crucified” both Lord (sovereign master) and Christ (Messiah, the Anointed One, Savior and Deliverer).”

Peter said, “And each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of [their] sins.”

Those who received his word (v. 41) were baptized.

If you believe this message about Jesus, change your heart and mind about Jesus and how you are living to match His teachings, confess Him to be the ruler of your life who saves and delivers you, then be baptized in His name, you can be part of the kind of church Christ will save.

Conclusion:

We are striving to be the church Christ established and died for, the church a community can favor while practicing what the New Testament church was authorized to do.

If you are a guest, please strongly consider the church family here; we may be the kind of church you are looking for.

If you are a member who wants a better church, be a better Christian.

Together we can be the kind of church that meets everyone’s true needs.