

## WHAT IS AN ACTS 2:42 CHURCH?

Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to (1) Apostles teaching, (2) fellowship and (3) breaking of bread, and (4) prayers!”

What is an Acts 2:42 Church? The Jerusalem Church that is mentioned in Acts chapter 2 is very special because it was the very first church that was planted on the face of the earth, and it was planted by God alone by the power of His Holy Spirit! This church was so unique, fresh and pure, and we can learn so much from their devoted worship and life style (Acts 2:42-47). The more we understand it, the more we would love to move our own hyperbolic modern churches toward this simple, original church. All denominations (including Roman Catholic Church) have emerged from this first Jerusalem church, and it is crucial that we take a good look at its doctrines and their worship to see where our own denominations stand. Let us see some of the striking features of this amazing church.

First of all, this church followed the perfect worship format of Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to Apostles teaching<sup>i</sup>, fellowship and breaking of bread<sup>ii</sup>, and prayers<sup>iii</sup>”. These four elements are basic structure of Christian Worship! Note the word, “devoted!” They were “addicted” to all four elements. All these four elements deserve equal attention. (It is like having four wheels in a car that requires equal attention i.e. correct air pressure, balancing, etc.). Any church that gives equal attention to all these four elements, and clings to “Apostles’ teaching can be called an Acts 2:42 church. The problem is that we tend to avoid certain elements (i.e. breaking of bread and fellowship), or fast forward them so fast, rather than savoring every moment of it. It is time, we reintroduce Acts 2:42 worship when we gather on Lord’s Day!

Secondly, Acts 2:42 church teaches us about intimate fellowship of love with each other. It is a self-giving, sacrificial, binding love. There is no touch and go fellowship! The believers in the congregation become a true family! We may not have to go to the extent of surrendering our property for communal living. But we could at least pool our resources to meet the needs of our poor neighbors, and organizing communal love feasts often, so that it can produce intimate, loving fellowship with one another! How can we attend a church week after week without even knowing most of our fellow Christians? Acts 2:42 church is all about

personal, intimate loving fellowship with each other. There is no place in God's church for impersonal attendance.

Thirdly, Acts 2:42 church was in one accord! It teaches us oneness in our doctrinal belief. It was all one God, one Lord, one Holy Spirit, one Church, one Faith, one Baptism<sup>iv</sup>, and one Hope! When they differed, they sat together and came to total agreement with each other! (Acts 15) Nowadays, the existence of millions of denominations tells us a different story. We are divided! It is time we look deep into the Acts 2:42 church, and follow these pure unadulterated simple Apostles' doctrines!

Fourthly, there was obedience to Lord's commandment - Love One another! It was that love of Christ that made the Acts 2:42 church to preach the Word, baptize, and make disciples, and also prompted them to share and care for each other! Their passion for their love for God and the people made them offer themselves as a living sacrifice! It is about time, we love one another in action also!

Finally, Acts 2:42 churches multiplied like wild fire in different neighborhood houses, and at times in rented places also. (Upper room in Jerusalem!) Small new churches require more elders and deacons, and that means, almost every member was a powerful force in God's kingdom. There was absolutely no room for "Spectators". Everyone had to pitch in and work diligently in God's kingdom. New Testament clearly tells us that God's church comprises of small, independent assemblies of close knit families of God that followed the Apostles' doctrines! We are interested in connecting with believers who are keen on promoting Acts 2:42 church worship, belief, intimate fellowship of love, and their mission. Let us strive to connect back to our original church – Acts 2:42 Church, which is the mother of all denominations! Let us proudly associate ourselves with this First Baptized Church of Jerusalem!

Please feel free to write to: [pastor@acts242church.org](mailto:pastor@acts242church.org) and let us know your thoughts on this topic!

Blessings,

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<sup>i</sup> What is Apostles' teaching? Apostles always used the Old Testament as their Scripture to prove that Jesus is Christ. Also, they were transmitting all the Words of Jesus, and His acts through oral tradition. Their own teachings and preaching through the Holy Spirit became letters later on. So we can safely say that the Apostles' teaching is actually the whole Bible!

<sup>ii</sup> Their worship was based on breaking of Bread as taught by Jesus (on Passover night, and after resurrection). Their fellowship centered on the full meal and breaking of bread. (But Paul in 1 Cor. 11, toned down the whole meal because of abuse). Of course when they broke bread, they listened to Apostles' teaching, and were praying also. So these four elements are the real pillars of Christian way of worship and they are equally important. There is no need that we should skip any part of it when we gather to worship on the first day of the week, (Sundays) remembering Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

<sup>iii</sup> Where do the Praise and worship songs fit in this Acts 2:42 worship format? They are actually prayers in songs! When we sing our songs as sincere prayers from our heart, it becomes a prayerful worship!

<sup>iv</sup> Most of the Christian denominations will agree with each other in almost all doctrines except the doctrine of Baptism (See our Beliefs). There is a striking difference in theology between infant baptisms versus Believers' baptism. The Jewish did not baptize anyone under 13 years and the Jews who were baptized had to say certain prayers. It was called the "Mikhva" and it was a complete immersion ritual. Apostles came from Jewish background, and their teaching was Repent first and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Jesus also taught that we must believe first and then be baptized. Also, the baptism was supposed to take place after the acceptance of Jesus Christ. God does everything for our salvation by His grace. But the only action He wants from us is our death, burial, and resurrection through immersion baptism. Through this dramatic baptism by immersion and our confession of faith, the believer makes the covenant that he or she will live for Lord Jesus, who died, was buried and raised again as the Lord of lords (Romans 6:4). It is an act of our absolute surrender and our lifelong commitment to the Lord. Gal.2:20).

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It is the official public proclamation of God's salvation, and our public marital union with Christ. Of course, the mode of baptism for Acts 2:42 church was immersion. (Baptizo – to immerse fully, to whet fully). Only confessing Christians were baptized. The early church held onto Apostles' tradition of immersion until fifth century. (If you travel to Ephesus in Turkey or to Philippi in Greece, you can still see the 4th century churches having baptismal pools!). But afterwards, the Catholic Church changed it to infant baptism, and they started just sprinkling water on new born babies. In Acts 8:36-38, the Ethiopian eunuch wanted to be baptized where there was some water. He could have easily used his drinking water for sprinkling or pouring, if that is the way the baptism was practiced. But he chose to go "into" the water. When Jesus and the disciples baptized, they chose a place where there was "much water"! (John 3:23) The mode of baptism of immersion also indicates clearly that the babies were not baptized! An in-depth study of Jewish "Mikhva" will clearly tell us that the mode of baptism was by immersion only. The baptism is dividing the body of Christ today theologically. But it was never a doctrinal dispute for four centuries. Why? Because they all practiced one baptism doctrine. When someone practiced differently, he or she was corrected immediately! (Acts 18:24-26; Acts 19:1-6) But this original believers' baptism was altered totally by the fifth century Christians! It is high time we obey Apostles' teachings, and their practices that are found in the Bible rather than following Roman Catholic tradition! Many denominations can become one again, if they can sit and reason out together, and decide to follow the Scriptural practice concerning baptism. But will the devil let it happen? I don't think so!