

The Church – Beginnings

lessons from the early church

The Church – Current Notions

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The Church – Unnecessary

- *“It’s great for becoming robotized, lobotomized, Romanized, and institutionalized. But its pointless for knowing Jesus Christ personally.”*
- *“I am of the opinion that aside from enhancing your social life and having a sense of community, a church is absolutely useless. If a church becomes responsible for providing food for the needy and shelter from the homeless, then it’s a different story. However, outside of those things, it is absolutely and utterly useless.”*
- *“a direct, personal relationship with God is paramount, and that attending a physical church is not a prerequisite for this relationship.”*

The Church – Optional

- *“What one generation finds optional the next will find unnecessary.”*
- *People leave churches because their “needs aren’t being met.”*
 - – *This attitude fosters a doctor- patient relationship with God.*
 - – *We have made Him a God who only meets our needs.*

The Church – Eternally Planned

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Creator: A Plan

- First Words – Gen 3: 15
 - I will make you and the woman enemies to each other.
Your children and her children will be enemies.
You will bite her child's foot,
but he will crush your head
- A plan that was from before time....
 - Ephesians 1:4: God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world"
 - Matthew 25:34: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"
 - 1 Peter 1:20: This verse speaks of Christ, "Christ was chosen before the world was made, but he was shown to the world in these last times for you"

The Plan: A Messiah

- Gen 12:2-3 - 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”
- He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Samuel 7:12–13).
- Prophecies of the Virgin birth, that he would be born in Bethlehem,
- Isaiah 53 – Suffering Servant
- Jesus the Perfect Sacrifice – Psalms 40:6-8, Hebs 10:5-10
- Psalms 22, Zechariah 12:10, 13:7 - Crucifixion

The Plan: A Kingdom

- Isaiah 9:6-7:A child will be born who will reign on David's throne, establishing a kingdom of peace and justice.
- Daniel 2:31-44:God's kingdom will be established in the days of earthly kingdoms, never to be destroyed.
- Daniel 7:27 Then God's holy people will rule over the kingdom and all the people from all the kingdoms of earth.^[a] This kingdom will last forever, and people from all the other kingdoms will respect and serve them.'

At Just the Right Time

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The Messiah and the Kingdom

- Matt 3:2 - and saying, “Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** has come near.”
- Matt 4:17 - From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** has come near.”
- Luke 4:43 - But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the **kingdom of God** to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”
- Luke 9:11 - but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the **kingdom of God**, and healed those who needed healing.

The Messiah and the Kingdom

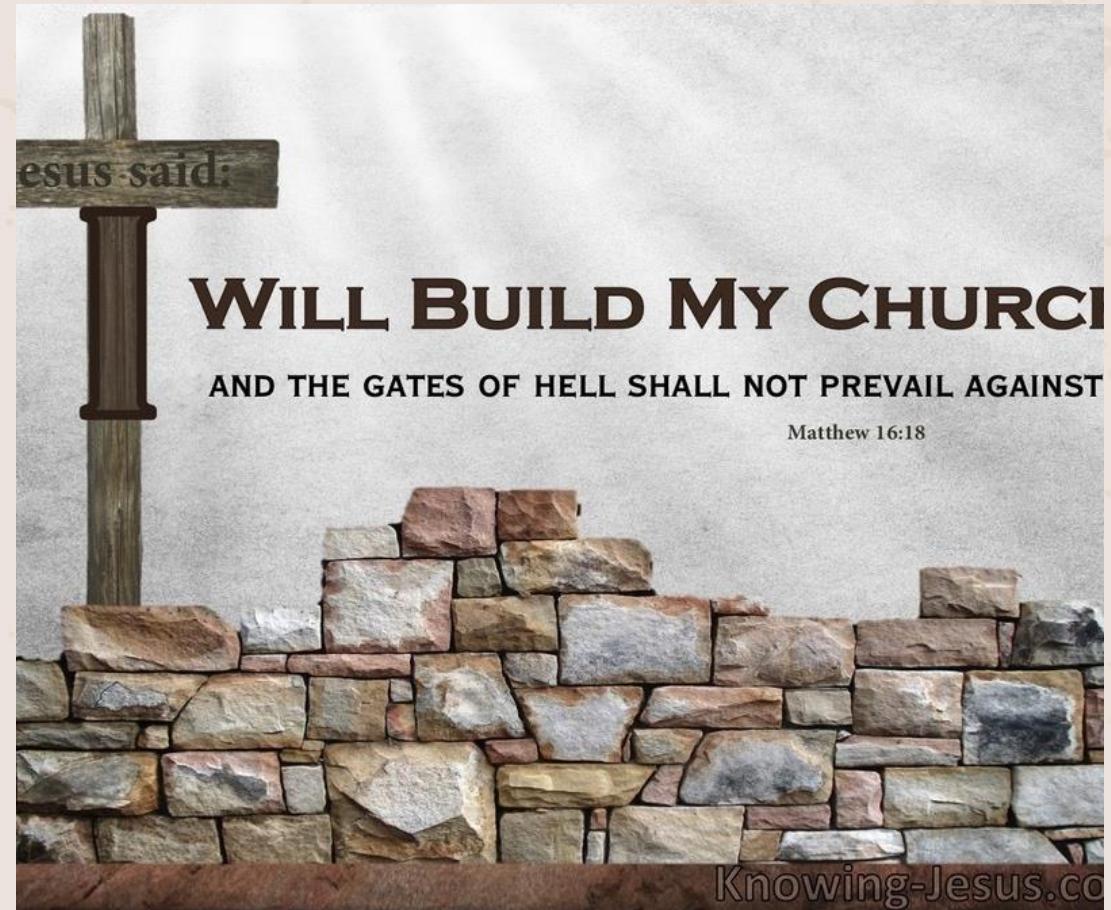
- Matt 13: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like...”
- Mark 15:43 - Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the **kingdom of God**, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.
- Luke 13:28 - ²⁸“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.
- John 3:3 - Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the **kingdom of God** unless they are born again.”

The Messiah and the Kingdom

- Mark 9:1 - Jesus went on to say, “I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Kingdom of God arrive in great power!” Also Luke 9: 27

The Church and The Kingdom

- Matt 16:18-19 Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock') and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."

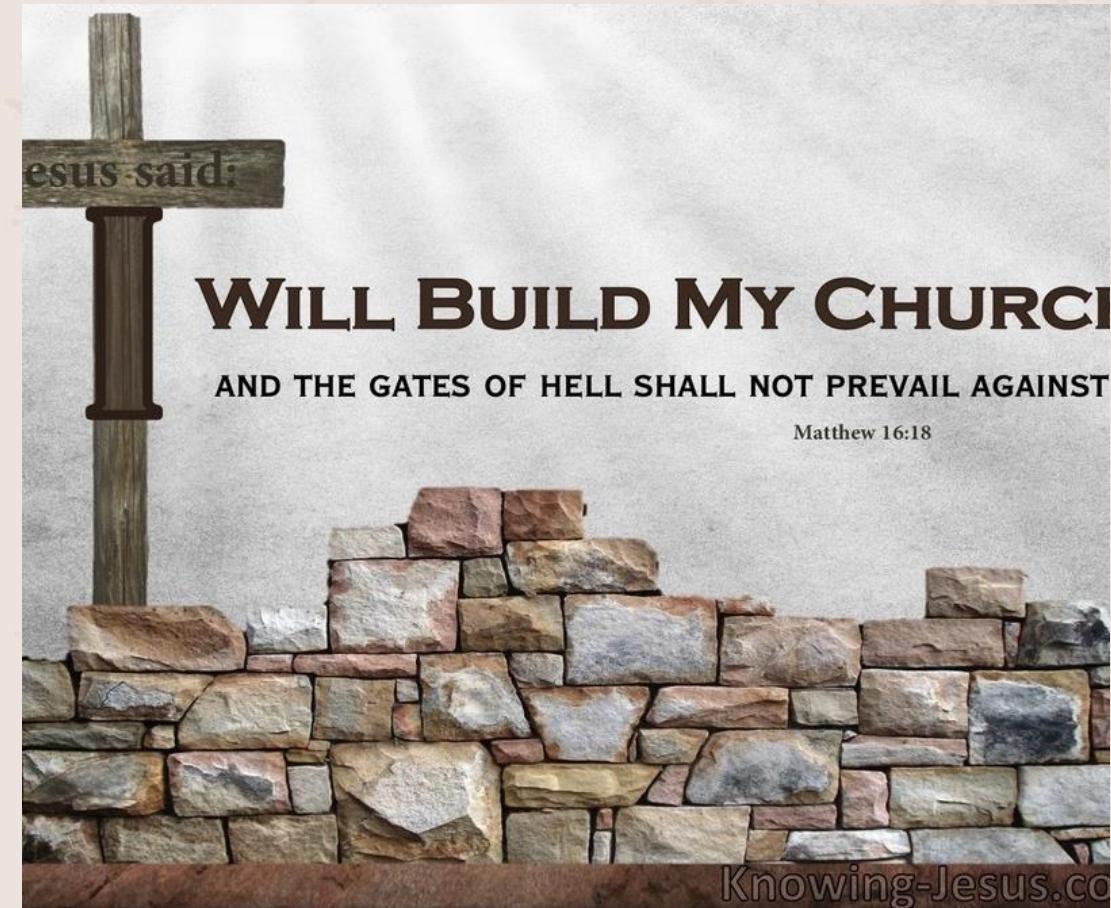


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The Church and The Kingdom

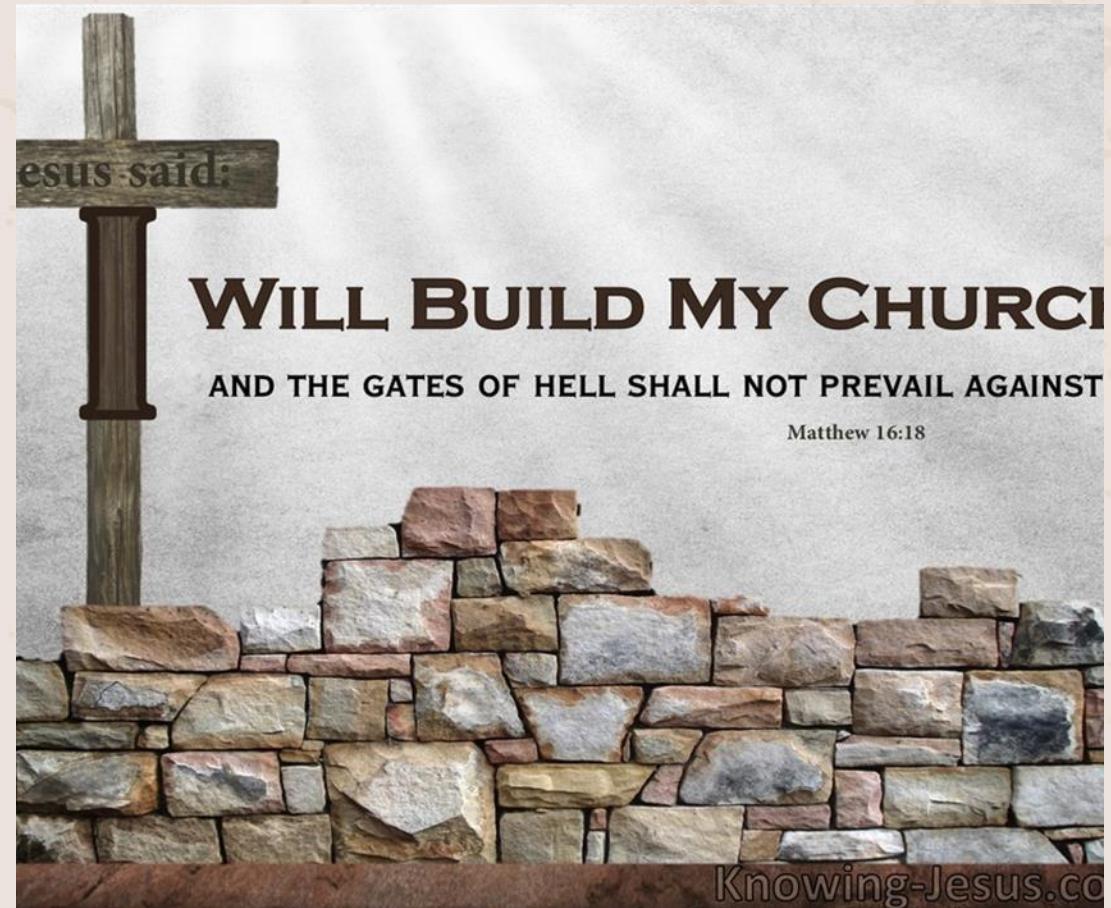
- ¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins. Col 1:13



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The Church and The Kingdom

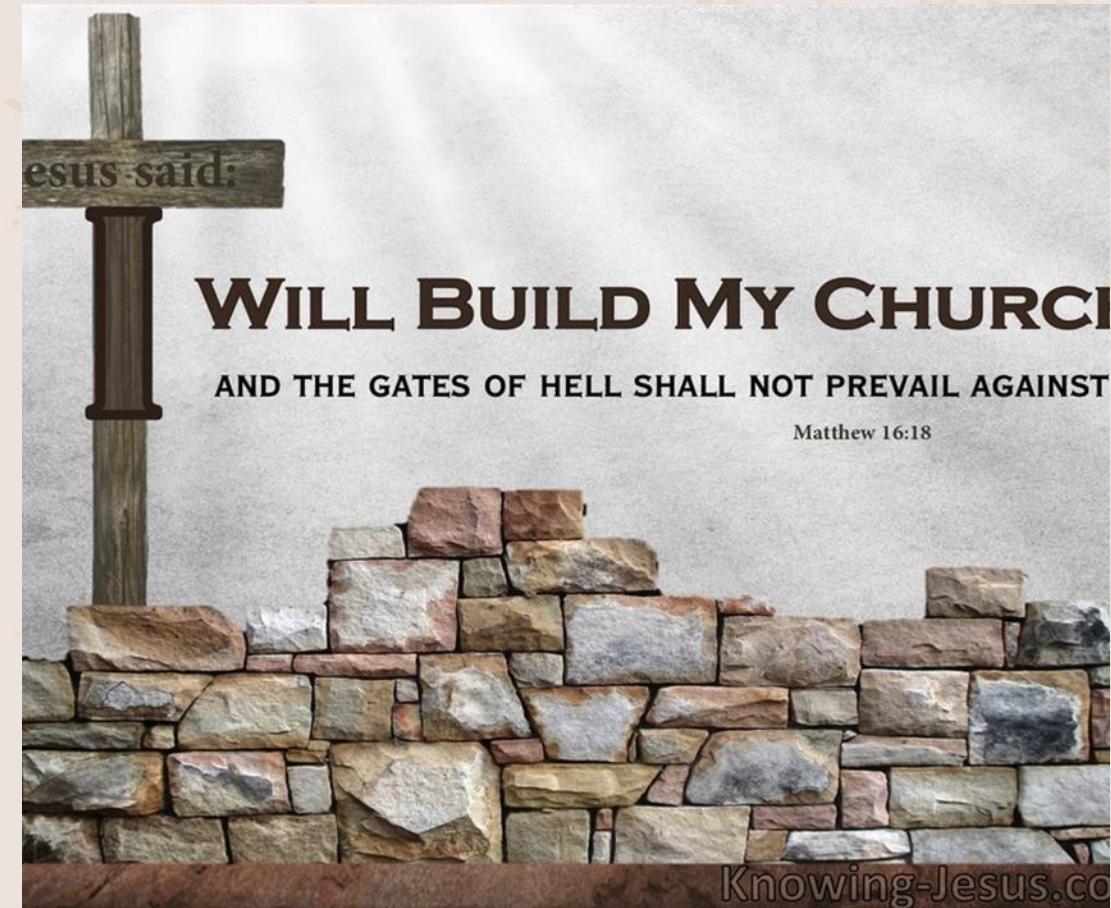
- **Acts 20:28** - ²⁸Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be **shepherds of the church of God**,^[a] which he bought with his own blood



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The Church and The Kingdom

- Rev 5:9-10 ⁹ And they all sang a new song to the Lamb:
- “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were killed, and with your blood sacrifice you bought people for God from every tribe, language, race of people, and nation.
¹⁰ You made them to be a **kingdom and to be priests for our God.**
And they will rule on the earth.”



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The Church in Acts

- Acts 5:11 - Great fear seized the whole **church** and all who heard about these events.
- Acts 8:1 - On that day a great persecution broke out against the **church** in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
- Acts 9:31 - Then the **church** throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.
- Acts 11:22 - News of this reached the **church** in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch

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The Church in the Epistles

- Ephs 1:22-23 - ²²God put everything under Christ's power and made him head over everything for the church. ²³The church is Christ's body. It is filled with him. He makes everything complete in every way.
- Ephs 2: 19-22 "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the **household of God**, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord."
- 1 Timothy 3:15 "so that if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves **in God's household**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth."

The Church: Conclusions

- Planned from the beginning of time as part of God's Redemption plan
- Is the Body of Christ, bought with his blood
- Is God's household
- Is the Outpost of the Kingdom of God on Earth for all the Saved, and is witnessing to the world the Kingdom of God

The First Day

Acts 2: 39-47

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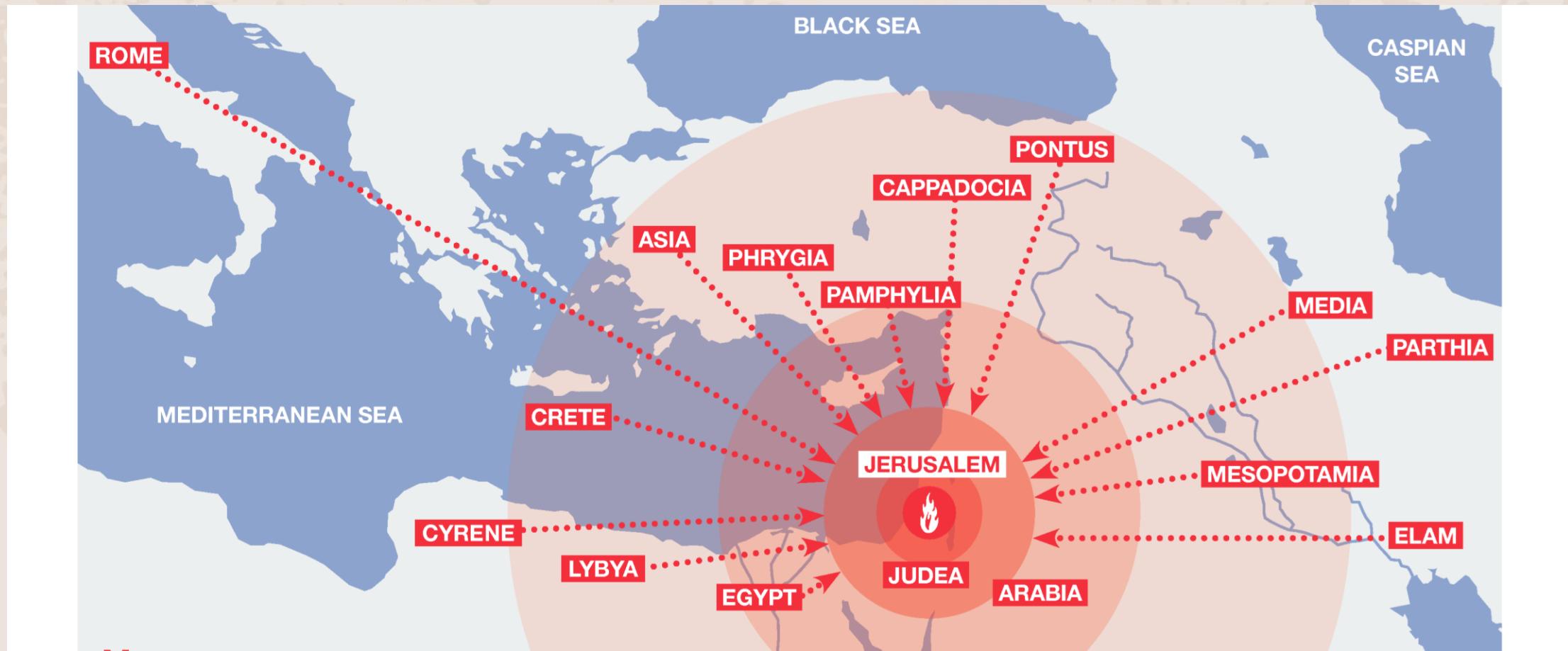
Pentecost

- Feast of Weeks Lev 23:9-11, 15-16
- Time of celebration
- Important Jewish Festival See Acts 20:16
- Grew to include remembrance of the Giving of the Law
- Parallel to Giving of Law on Mt Sinai



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Who were these people?



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What did they believe?

- Before Peter's Sermon
 - The Prophecies of the Messiah
 - The Coming Kingdom
- After Peter's Sermon
 - Jesus was the Messiah
 - They were lost



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Why did they respond?



- 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”.... 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

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The attitudes and actions of the first new Christians



- They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching
- to fellowship,
- to the breaking of bread
- to prayer.

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Their actions – Driven by their faith

- So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ Romans 10:17

The Apostles Teaching

- Acts 2:42 - ⁴²All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching,
- 5:25 - Then someone arrived with startling news: "The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple, **teaching** the people!"
- 5:42 - And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease **teaching** and preaching that the Christ is Jesus

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What the Apostles were to Teach – Jesus the Messiah by the Power of his Ressurrection

- Acts 2 – “³²So Jesus is the one God raised from death. We are all witnesses of this. We saw him. ”, So, all the people of Israel should know this for certain: God has made Jesus to be Lord and Messiah. He is the man you nailed to the cross
- Acts 3 – “And so you killed the one who gives life! But God raised him from death. We are witnesses of this—we saw it with our own eyes.”
- Acts 4 - ¹⁰We want all of you and all the people of Israel to know that this man was made well by the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth. You nailed Jesus to a cross, but God raised him from death.

What the Apostles were to Teach

- Luke 9: 1-2 - When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to **proclaim the kingdom of God** and to heal the sick.

What they were to Teach

- Matthew 28:19-20 ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**

A Helper

- Matthew 10:19-20: Jesus tells his disciples, "do not be anxious about how you should speak or what you should say, for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you".
- John 14:26: The Holy Spirit is described as the "Advocate" who will "teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you".

The attitudes and actions of the first new Christians



All the believers were together and had everything in common.

- They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.
- 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,
- Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people

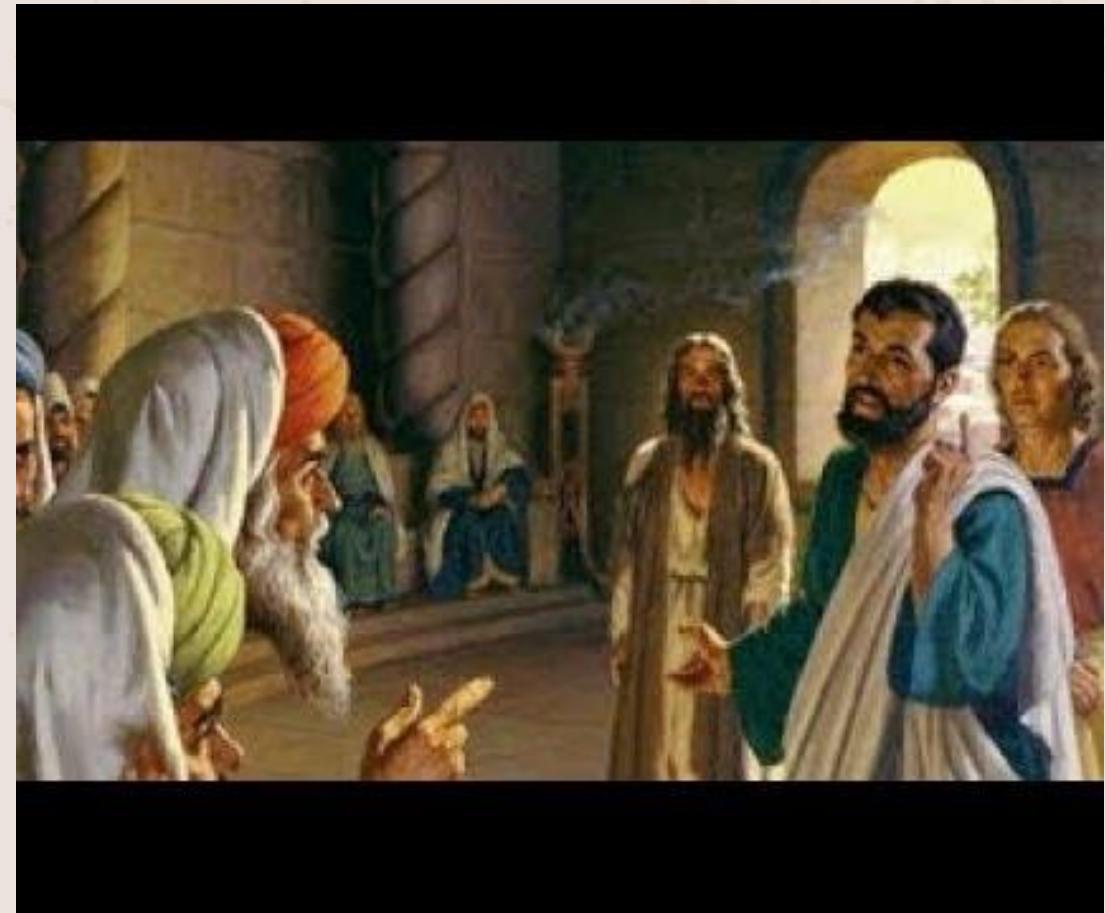
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Opposition

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External Opposition

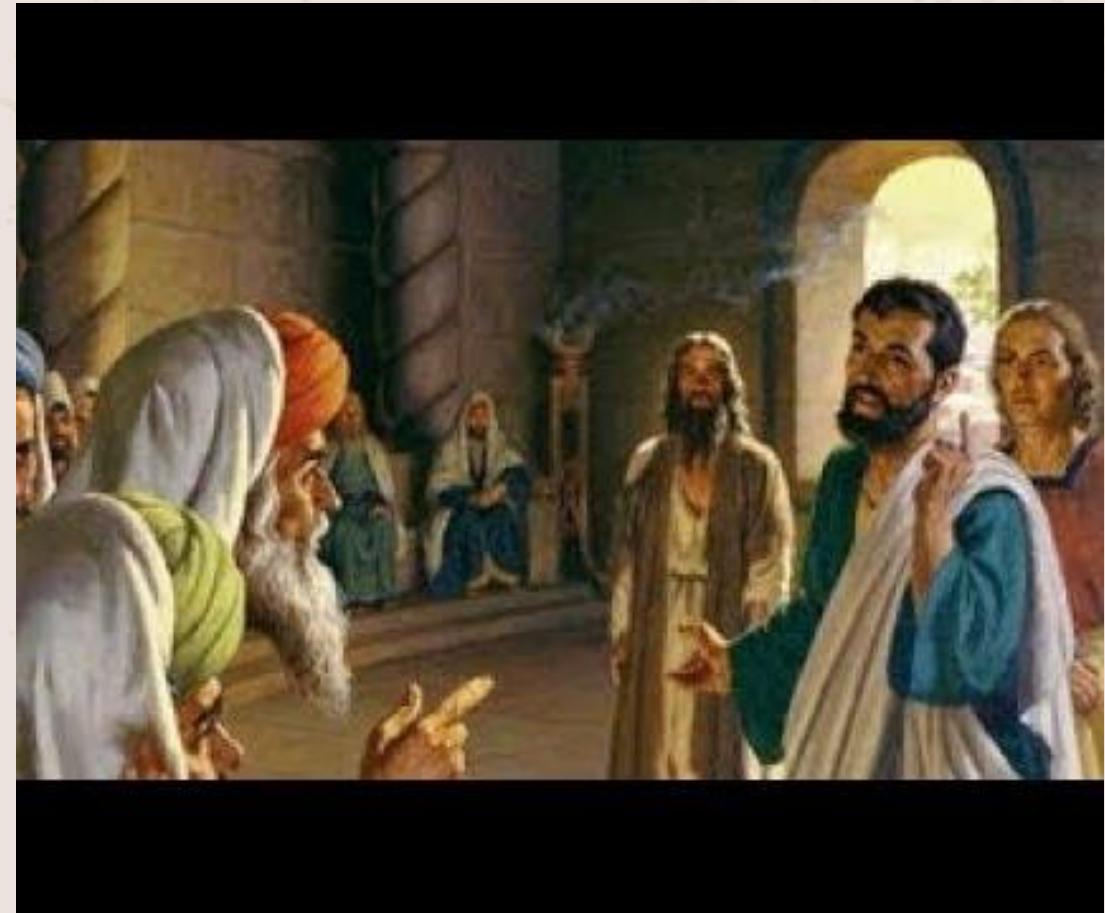
- **Christ Predicted**
 - John 16:1-3
- People will tell you to leave their synagogues and never come back. In fact, the time will come when they will think that killing you would be doing service for God.³ They will do this because they have not known the Father, and they have not known me.⁴ I have told you all this now to prepare you. So when the time comes for these things to happen, you will remember that I warned you



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External Opposition

- **Response – Boldness**
 - Acts 4
 - Acts 8
- 29 And now, Lord, listen to what they are saying. They are trying to make us afraid. We are your servants. Help us to say what you want us to say without fear. 30 Help us to be brave by showing us your power....



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External Opposition

- How?
 - See Matt 5:12 - “People will insult you and hurt you. They will lie and say all kinds of evil things about you because you follow me. But when they do that, know that great blessings belong to you. ¹² Be happy about it. Be very glad because you have a great reward waiting for you in heaven. People did these same bad things to the prophets who lived before you.



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Opposition – Internal

- The Soul of Christianity is Unity
 - John 17:21
- Disunity one of things God hates
 - Proverbs 6:16-19
- Satan's goal is to sow disunity
 - Rev 2:10

THESE SIX THINGS THE LORD HATES,
YES, SEVEN ARE AN ABOMINATION TO HIM:
A PROUD LOOK,
A LYING TONGUE,
HANDS THAT SHED INNOCENT BLOOD,
A HEART THAT DEVISES WICKED PLANS,
FEET THAT ARE SWIFT IN RUNNING TO EVIL,
A FALSE WITNESS WHO SPEAKS LIES,
AND ONE WHO SOWS DISCORD AMONG
BRETHREN.
PROVERBS 6:16-19, NKJV

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Opposition – Internal

- Predicted by Paul
 - Acts 20:28-30
- Observed by Paul
 - I Cor 1:10-12



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Division Threatened

- Annanias and Sapphira - Acts 5
- Care of the Widows – Acts 6
- Doctrine – Jewish Law and Christianity – Acts 15

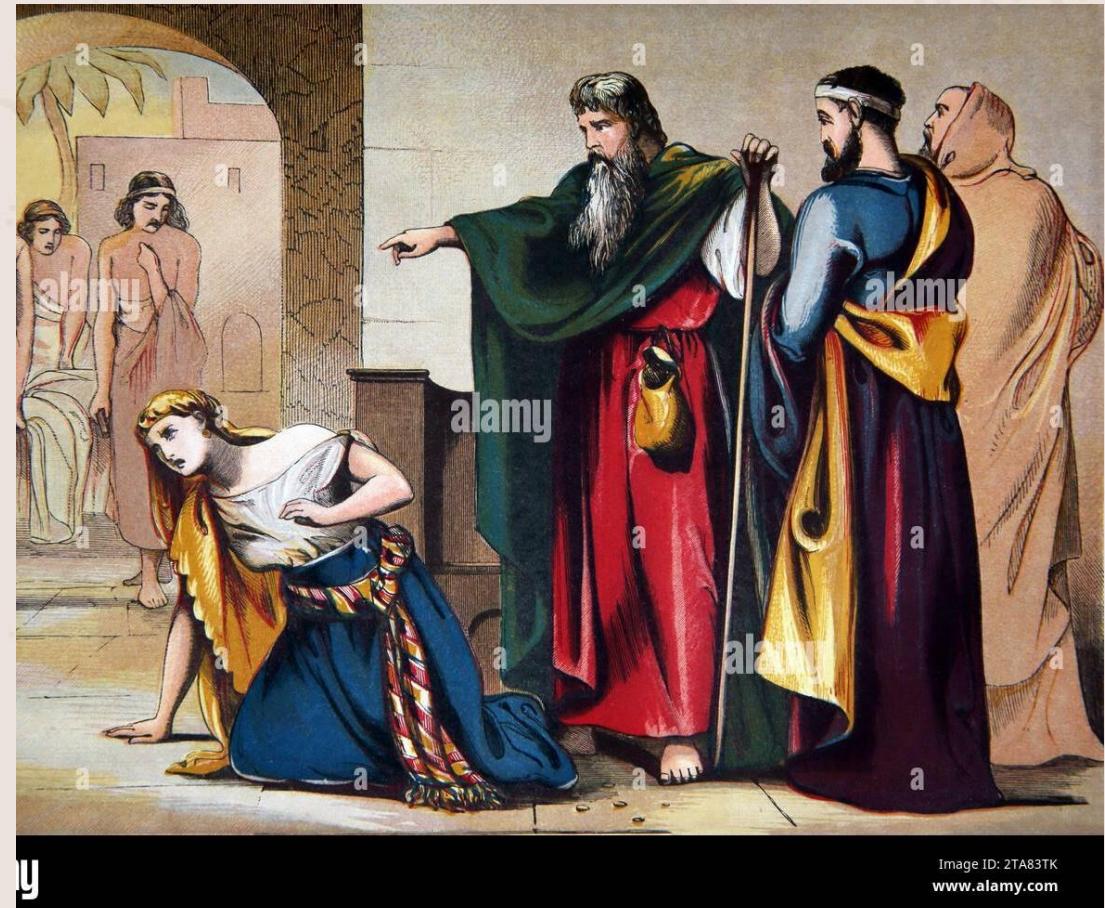


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Division Addressed

- Annanias and Sapphira - Acts 5
- Care of the Widows – Acts 6
- Doctrine – Jewish Law and Christianity – Acts 15

The Seven Deacons



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Keys to Dealing with Division



Factors that set the environment for Division:

- Lack of humility
- Lack of Love; Lack of Knowledge;
- Lack of relationships;

Factors that set the environment for Unity:

- Love for each other; Proper attitude towards division; Patience; Courage (to address directly)

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Key Behaviors to Emulate

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What things would we most want to emulate from the First Church?

Growth

- 2:41, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7



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What things would we most want to emulate from the First Church?

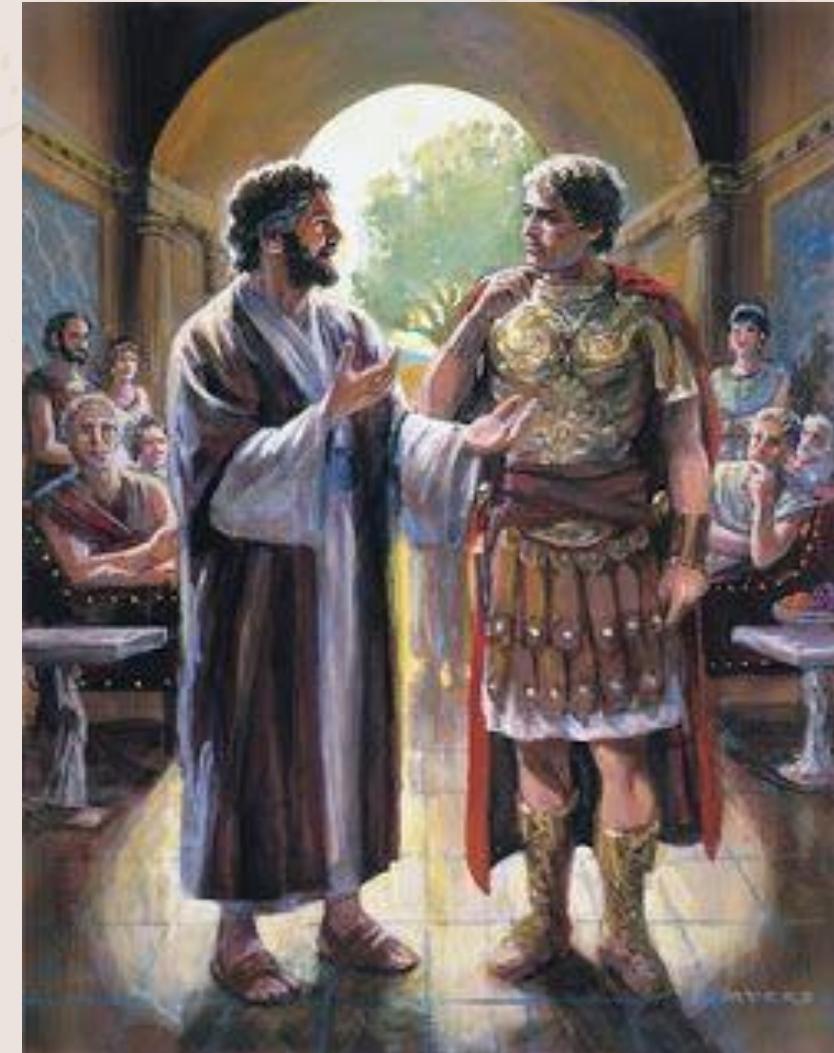
- An unmovable belief in:
 - Who Jesus was,
 - What he meant to them
 - His resurrection
 - His imminent return



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What things would we most want to emulate from the First Church?

- The ability to overcome Prejudice



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What things would we most want to emulate from the First Church?

- Everyday Fellowship



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What things would we most want to emulate from the First Church?

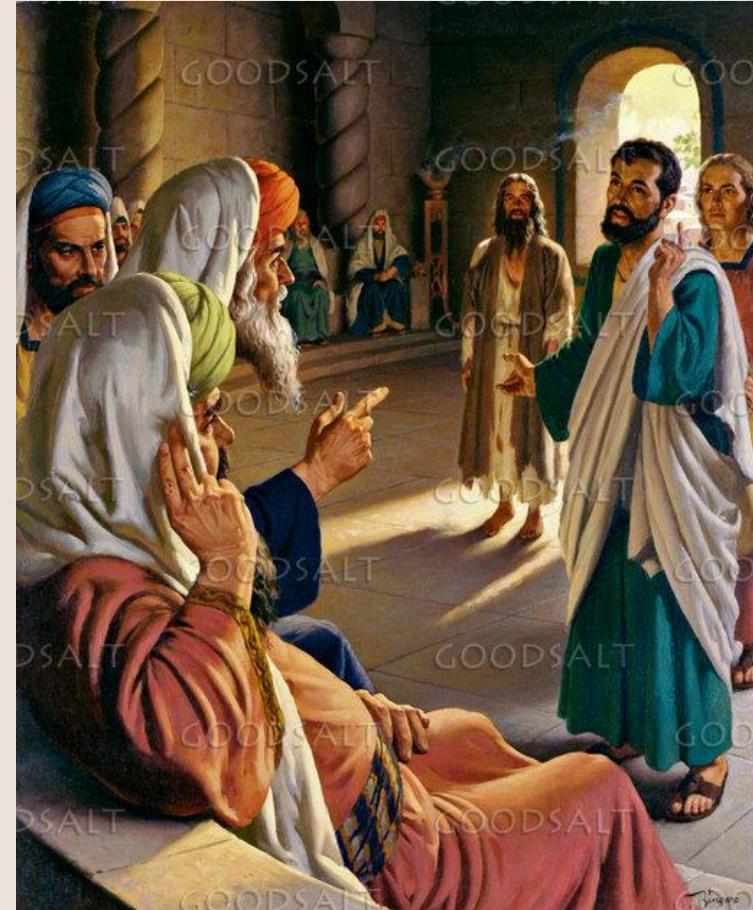


- Incredible Generosity and Benevolence

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What things would we most want to emulate from the First Church?

- Boldness of Action and Word



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What things would we most want to emulate from the First Church?



- Unity of Spirit and Purpose

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What things would we most want to emulate from the First Church?

- A Commitment to Evangelism



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Imitating the first Church today means:

- An unmovable faith in Jesus
- The ability to overcome prejudice
- Everyday Fellowship
- Incredible Generosity and Benevolence
- Boldness of Action and Word
- Unity of Spirit and Purpose
- Commitment to Evangelism



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