

Early Christian church & its characteristics


THE HOUSEHOLD CHURCHES :

THE FIRST CHURCHES WERE HOMES, OF BELIEVERS/ PATRONS.

“WHEN THE DAY OF PENTECOST HAD COME, THEY WERE ALL TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE. ² AND SUDDENLY FROM HEAVEN THERE CAME A SOUND LIKE THE RUSH OF A VIOLENT WIND, AND IT FILLED THE ENTIRE **HOUSE** οἴκον WHERE THEY WERE SITTING.”

(ACTS 2:1-2)

- THE CHURCH IN THE **HOUSE** OF PRISCA AND AQUILA – (**ROMANS 16:3-5**)



“Excavations have revealed large upper class homes that date from first century and used as churches. Churches were built at sites of homes owned by Christian patrons where house churches had met.”

- *Roman House Churches For Today* , Reta Halteman Finger , Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company , 2007. (Page. 28)

FEATURES OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH WORSHIP

1. Instruction In the word(Prophecies completed in Jesus Christ)
2. Oral testimony (apostolic teachings)
3. Breaking of the bread (Eucharistic meal)
 - ▶ - *Sursum Corda Lift up your hearts*
 - ▶ - *Let us give thanks :*
 - ▶ - *Thanksgiving prayer*
 - ▶ - *Blessing of the Bread & wine (A high priestly prayer/ eucharistic prayer is recited)*

FEATURES..

- ▶ 4. PRESENCE of Prophets - eucharistic Prayers, spreading word of god to others
- ▶ 5. Apostles – served within the community
- ▶ 6. Primitive communism in Christian community – sharing property & wealth but wasn't compulsory
 - As in Qumran community ; but not followed successfully by Christians.

The Geographical spread of Christianity In The Early Centuries

- ▶ “The Major regions where Christian populations were found in the period up until Constantine: **Asia Minor (and Achaea), Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia, Gaul, North Africa and Rome.**”

- *The Cambridge History of Christianity: ORIGINS TO CONSTANTINE*

The Geographical spread of Christianity In The Early Centuries to...

PALESTINE

SYRIA (EDESSA , ANTIOCH)

ALEXANDRIA (EGYPT)

GREECE (& TURKEY)

ROMAN CHURCHES: ROME AND PUZZEOLI

THE ASIAN AFRICAN CHURCH

- ▶ Expansion of Christianity at the end of first century largely to eastern Mediterranean regions (Asian - African churches) not much to west

Two important factors :

1. Power of Preaching by Apostles
2. Power of Martyrdom (Blood & Testimony)

▶ **Cultural languages** (as on the cross)

Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews (John 19:19). John 19:20 states that this was written in three languages

1. Hebrew- /Aramaic
2. Greek
3. Latin, was put on the **cross** of **Jesus**.

THE JEWISH SECTS

▶ Essenes

Believed in the soul living on in the after life. The Essenes were also known for voluntarily living in poverty and performing water purification rituals. The Essenes devoted much of their time to studying and were stricter than the Pharisees in regards to the Sabbath. This group was reported to have avoided marriage and often led a celibate life.

Pharisees

- ▶ Pharisees- Along with the Sadducees, they were one of the two largest sects in Israel during the two centuries prior to the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 C.E.

Sadducees

- ▶ Sadducees- The word Sadducee is thought to be derived from Zadok, Solomon's High Priest. The sect was drawn from priestly, aristocratic, and military circles.

Zealots

- ▶ also known as the Fourth Philosophy
- ▶ The most important trait for this group was their passion for liberty.
- ▶ They also showed real zeal for God.



SUGGESTED READINGS

- ▶ *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY* , Everett Ferguson E.d, New York: Routledge,1999.
- ▶ *Roman House Churches For Today* , Reta Halteman Finger , Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company , 2007.
- ▶ *The Cambridge History of Christianity: ORIGINS TO CONSTANTINE*, MARGARET M. MITCHELL and FRANCES M. YOUNG Eds. , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.