

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE EARLY CHURCH

RLJ-1998

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PART 2: WORKING IN THE FLESH

JESUS GONE FROM EARTH

Jesus returned to heaven forty days after rising from the dead. He did not appoint a leader and left the disciples with the same setup from the previous 3.5 years with exception that the twelve apostles had been reduced to eleven. There were still the 70 others and the 38 women.

None of the books in the New Testament existed; all teaching was spoken. More than likely the apostles thought Jesus would return during their lifetime. This belief is based upon the fact that when people were added to the church, a commune developed in Jerusalem and people sold their possessions to cover the cost of food and lodging for the fledgling church consisting of new Jewish Christians. **Acts 4:32-35**

THE UPPER ROOM

There are no coincidences in the Kingdom of God. The New Testament does not reveal who was the owner of the house that featured a large upper room capable of accommodating 120 persons. Whoever it was, they were wealthy and a secret follower of Jesus. Jesus knew this person, because when He sent Peter and John to prepare for the Passover meal, the owner offered the upper room for Jesus and His apostles. **Luke 22:7-13**

This was a safehouse unknown to the ungodly Jewish leadership and where most of Jesus' followers spent time after the crucifixion. It is important to understand that the apostles and the seventy others were from Galilee. Thus, it would have been natural for them to lodge in the upper room since they had no homes in Jerusalem. **Acts 1:13**

SHAVUOT

Shavuot is a Hebrew word meaning "Festivals of the Weeks." It is the second of the three Pilgrim Festivals of the Jewish calendar which takes place fifty days after the Passover. In Greek it is known as "Pentecost."

The word Pentecost has become synonymous with the Holy Spirit and the fiery baptism that occurred fifty days after the Passover. The Pentecostal denomination which arose from the Azusa Street Revival in 1905, derives its name from that transformational day some 1,900 years earlier when the 120 disciples in the upper room were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

At this time there were as many Jews living outside Judea than in Judea itself. According to Solomon Grayzel, the Jewish population in Judea was 2,500,000 and there were an equal number of Jews living outside Judea.¹

¹ Grayzel, Solomon; A HISTORY OF THE JEWS, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948, p.138



- ❖ 100,000 Jews in Rome
- ❖ 100,000 in Cyrenaica (eastern Libya)
- ❖ 1,000,000 in Egypt
- ❖ 100,000 in Asia Minor (Turkey)
- ❖ 1,000,000 in Babylon

Most people are ignorant of the fact that Jerusalem was a tourist town, drawing thousands of Jews from throughout the Roman Empire who came to attend Jewish holidays at the massive temple complex. Some even came from Ethiopia; these converts dated back to the time of King Solomon when the Queen of Sheba had converted to the Hebrew faith with her whole nation.

Hotels did not exist and many residents of Jerusalem lodged traveling Jews in their homes, providing them with meals and sleeping quarters. The native Jews in and around Jerusalem made a living from their visiting countrymen.

JEWISH HOLIDAYS

There were five holidays celebrated by the Jews.

1. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the spring.
2. Shavuot (Pentecost) in early summer.
3. Feasts of the Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) in the fall.
4. The Day of the Atonement (Yom Kippur) which took place ten days after the Feast of the Trumpets.
5. Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot, also known as Harvest Festival) in the fall. Simple booths were erected and used as homes for seven days.

Jews living outside Judea planned to attend these feasts as often as possible. Since it was expensive to travel to Jerusalem and pay for the lodging, only the wealthy, those with high government jobs, businessmen, and other influential Jews could afford to attend the various feast days in Jerusalem.

THE WISDOM OF GOD

The Godhead had full knowledge of the Jewish holidays. They knew that Jerusalem would be packed with influential Jews from the Roman empire, Ethiopia, and the Middle East on the day of Pentecost.

The timing involved the Holy Spirit baptizing the core followers of Jesus (120) and having them pour out of the upper room and into the streets, speaking in foreign languages, declaring Jesus as the Messiah. Three thousand Jewish men were converted in one day, and when they returned home, they became the first missionaries. **Acts 2:37-42**

CLUELESS OF THE FUTURE

The apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives after the ascension of Jesus to the house with the upper room. It was the eleven apostles, the seventy others

and the thirty-eight women waiting for God the Father to fulfill the promise voiced out loud by Jesus. They came together in unity – a difficult task – and their days were filled prayer. **Acts 1:12-14**

Peter decided that someone needed to be in charge and appointed himself leader of the group. He figured they should replace Judas since there had originally been twelve positions filled by Jesus. **Acts 1:15-20**

REPLACING JUDAS

It is obvious that the Holy Spirit did not instruct them to fill Judas' spot and Peter used logic to convince the group of his plan. **verses 21-22**

There were 70 men to choose from and they selected two candidates. We don't know why two men were picked and one of them should serve as a replacement. Why not just select one man? The answer is found just a little bit later in their democratic vote.

Peter and the rest decided it was time to pray. They presented God with two candidates, intending for the Holy Spirit to finish the process of replacing Judas. However, their fleshly attempt – because that's what it was – was not well received by God. **verses 23-25**

Instead of waiting for the Holy Spirit to speak to them, they decided that they would help the Holy Spirit and came up with two candidates. Since they were moving in the flesh, they decided to cast lots on the matter, hoping this action would help the Holy Spirit select the right man. Matthias was chosen, but he was ignored by the Holy Spirit, and his name is not mentioned again in the New Testament. **verse 26**

SUMMARY

Working in the flesh is always disastrous. Good intentions do not carry any weight with God. He does not want us to operate in such a capacity. It is obvious that Jesus was not in a hurry to replace Judas even if Peter was hasty and zealous to restore their numbers.

Saul of Tarsus was selected by the Godhead before the foundation of the world to replace Judas Iscariot.

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead...

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace...” (Galatians 1:1, 15)

Paul would be shortly introduced to the apostles as a persecutor of the worst kind and recruited by Jesus as His man to bring the number back to twelve.

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?