

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

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PART 1: THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

There are about 10,000 religions in the world. These movements range worldwide with the major ones being Christianity, Roman Catholicism, Islam, and Hinduism. There are a lot of smaller religions. Only two faith movements were initiated by God:

1. Abrahamic faith
2. The Church started by Jesus

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Jesus never spoke about church membership in the four Gospels. When the God-man walked on earth, His ministry was based in the province of Galilee north of Jerusalem. It is estimated that up to 30,000 people followed Jesus and became disciples, but a lot of people were repulsed by the message of eating the God-man's flesh and drinking His blood. They did not want anything to do with cannibalism, completely missing the point, and walked away, rejecting Him as the Messiah.

"I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.



These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not.

For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” (John 6:48-66)

Only 120 disciples (twelve apostles, seventy others and thirty-nine women) remained by the time Jesus walked into Jerusalem to confront the Jewish leadership prior to the crucifixion.

“And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty.” (Acts 1:13-15)

THE EARLY CHURCH

The word “church” is derived from the Greek word “ekklesia,” which refers to “a gathering of people” or “an assembly of people.” There were no church buildings during the time of the early church as Christians met in the homes of believers.

Each city had a bishop who was in charge of the different home groups with elders and deacons as helpers. The bishop taught the elders and deacons, who in turn ministered to the different home groups.

The bishops were independent of each other for the first 300 years as there was no centralized leadership of the different city churches.

THE CHURCHES

The letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) were written by the apostle John around AD 90, some 57 years after the Day of Pentecost. Most of

them were started by the apostle Paul, Barnabas, and Silas. Paul had been killed 26 years earlier at the time of this writing.

These seven city churches were now managed by the second generation of Christians. Some churches received praise and others were rebuked. I share this information to show there was no central leadership over the different churches. Each one was ruled by a bishop, who in turn had elders and deacons under him.

“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

(Revelation 1:20)

Men and women of a city were considered members of the local church after they were born again and baptized in water.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41)

There were no formal membership classes and denominations did not exist.

Those who repented and trusted in Christ were called “Christians.”

“And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26)

When the apostle Paul penned the letter to the Hebrews, he exhorted Christians to gather together for worship and fellowship. He emphasized the need to meet corporately with other believers to worship, partake in communion, and to help each other.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

(Hebrews 10:25)

STATE CHURCHES

The early church from the Book of Acts does not exist anymore. It has been replaced with government sponsored churches in many cases.

The Roman Catholic Church came into being in AD 325. Emperor Constantine was its first pope and he was not born again. He made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and its citizens automatically became members of the newly formed state religion. In order to run this behemoth, a hierarchy was set up with the pope at the top and bishops who ruled the local churches throughout the empire.

The Roman Empire was split politically into western and eastern parts in AD 395; the final schism came in 1054 with the state church. The western part kept its name and

headquarters in Rome, while the eastern part became known as the Eastern Orthodox Church with its decentralized authority.

Christianity had been wiped out in northern Africa when the Muslim armies swept in from Egypt to Morocco; by AD 909, all Christians had been killed in North Africa.

The Eastern Orthodox church fractured into the Greek Orthodox church and the Russian Orthodox church – both were state religions.

The Roman Catholic church dominated Europe until Martin Luther launched his rebellion in 1516-17 and inadvertently started the Protestant rebellion, which spread into Germany, Holland and the Scandinavian countries which adopted the Lutheran faith as their state religions.

England broke away from the Roman Catholic Church during the reformation years 1509-1559 and replaced it with the Church of England.

The French Revolution (1789-1794) broke the yoke of the Roman Catholic Church in France. By end of 1900, nation after nation broke away from Romanism as the state church. The Roman Catholic Church was separated from Italy in 1929 and since then only rules its small city-state of Vatican City.

The respective governments of the Scandinavian countries broke the hold of the state Lutheran church during the 20th century, but the Church of England remains to the present day.

In the Scandinavian churches, law dictated that when a baby was born, it was automatically enrolled as a member of the state church. Thus, few members of the Lutheran churches were actually born again and hell was their destination when they died.

AMERICAN CHURCHES

With the American revivals beginning in the 1700s, several different denominations of Baptists emerged.

The Church of England is known as the Episcopal church.

The Pentecostal denominations have their origin in the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles from the early 1900s.

The Jesus revolution among the hippies in the 1960s gave birth to the Calvary churches, Vineyard churches, etc.

There are many small churches that were started by a pastor or a group of believers. This was the case with Resurrection Life of Jesus Church that came into existence in 1986.

FALSE CHURCHES

There are also many churches that rejected the New Testament teachings and were founded by false prophets:

- ❖ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith.

- ❖ The Jehovah's Witnesses had its origins in the 1870s with Charles Taze Russell.
- ❖ The Seventh Day Adventists began in 1863 with Ellen G. White.
- ❖ The World-Wide Church of God came into being in 1933 by Herbert W. Armstrong.

FINDING A LOCAL CHURCH

How do you go about finding a local church? Do a search utilizing Google maps for churches in your area. Most churches have a website listing their beliefs.

1. If their doctrinal statement agrees with the Bible, set up a meeting with the pastor and discover what his goals are for the church.
2. Does he believe the Holy Spirit is still active today?
3. Does Jesus still heal people from sickness?
4. Does the pastor know how to cast out demons?

Stay away from any church that denies the power of the Holy Spirit and believes the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today. Any shepherd that behaves in such a manner is treating the church like a country club.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” (Revelation 3:14-17)

Attending a church where the Holy Spirit is not welcome is detrimental to your spiritual well-being and you will eventually become just like them.

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?