

The First Church: Worthy Traits

THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH, Acts 2:1-7:60

The First Church: Worthy Traits, Acts 2:41-47

1. (Acts 2:41) Word of God: the early believers were a people who received the Word gladly.

Acts 2:41 (NASB)

⁴¹“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”

1. This is the basic trait, the very first trait of a true church. It actually defines a church. A church is a people, a body of people who have received *the Word of God*.

They were not receiving.....

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. a set of ideas | 4. a human philosophy |
| 2. a man's thoughts | 5. a position |
| 3. a set of rules and principles | 6. a religion |

They were receiving the Word of God, the very revelation of God Himself. God had revealed Himself in Jesus Christ to His disciples. And Peter, the spokesman for the disciples, was proclaiming the Word about Jesus Christ. God had spoken to the world through His Son Jesus Christ, and the early believers had received His Word. (See below Deeper Study #1, The Word—John 1:1-5.)

DEEPER STUDY # 1

John 1:1-5 (NASB)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God.

³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

(John 1:1-5) The Word— Jesus Christ, Son of God: the *Word (logos)* is Jesus Christ. John faced a serious problem in writing to the Gentiles, that is, the non-Jewish world. Most Gentiles had never heard of the Messiah or Savior who was expected by the Jews. The idea was foreign to them.

However, the Messiah was the very center of Christianity. How was John going to present Christ so that a Gentile could understand?

The answer lays in the idea of the *Word*, for the *Word* was understood by both Gentile and Jew.

1. The Jews saw a word as something more than a mere sound. A word was something active and existing. It was power—it possessed the power to express something, to do something. This is seen in the many Old Testament references where *The Word of God* was seen as the creative power of God, the power that made the world and gave light and life to every man ([Genesis 1:3, 6, 11](#); [Psalm 33:6](#); [Psalm 107:20](#); [Psalm 147:15](#); [Isaiah 55:11](#)).

2. The Gentiles or Greeks saw the *Word* more philosophically.

a. When they looked at the world of nature, they saw that things were not chaotic, but orderly. Everything had its place and moved or grew in an orderly fashion, including the stars above and the vegetation below. Therefore, the Greeks said that behind the world was a mind, a reason, a power that made and kept things in their proper place. This creative and sustaining mind, this supreme reason, this unlimited power was said to be the *Word*.

b. The *Word* was also seen as the power that enabled men to think and reason. It was the power that brought light and understanding to man's mind and enabled him to express his jumbled up thoughts in an orderly fashion.

c. More importantly, the *Word* was the power by which men came into contact with God and expressed their feelings to God.

3. John grabbed hold of this common idea of the Jews and Gentiles. He proclaimed that Jesus Christ was the *Word*. John saw that a word is the expression of an idea, a thought, and an image in the mind of a person. He saw that a word describes what is in the mind of a person. Thus, he proclaimed that in the life of Jesus Christ, God was speaking to the world, speaking and demonstrating just what He wanted to say to man.

John said three things.

a. God has given us much more than mere words in the Holy Scriptures. God has given us Jesus Christ, *The Word*. As *The Word*, Jesus Christ was the picture, the expression, the pattern, the very image of what God wished to say to man. The very image within God's mind of the *Ideal Man* was demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the perfect expression of all that God wishes man to be. Jesus Christ was

God's utterance, God's speech, *God's Word* to man. Jesus Christ was the *Word* of God who came down to earth in human flesh to bring man into a face to face relationship with God (cp. [John 1:1-2](#)). Jesus was the *Word of God who came to earth to live out the written Word of God.*

[John 1:1-2 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

²He was in the beginning with God.”

b. Jesus Christ is the Mind, the Reason, and the Power that both made and keeps things in their proper order. He is the creative and sustaining Mind, the Supreme Reason, the unlimited Power (cp. [John 1:3](#)).

[John 1:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

c. Jesus Christ is the Light, the Illumination, and the Power that penetrates the darkness of the world. He, the Life and Light of the world, is what makes sense of the world and enables men to understand the world (cp. [John 1:4-5](#)).

[John 1:4-5 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

⁵The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

[Acts 2:41 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴¹“So then, those who had **received** his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”

2. Note the word “received.” The word “received” (*apodechomai*) means “to take fully, to welcome, to approve fully, to accept”. A true church, a true body of believers, does not just hear and listen to the Word. They are not just present to join the crowd and see what is going on. They do not sit with **wandering minds** and **closed hearts**.

A true church receives the Word of God; they.....

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. welcome it | 6. hold on to it |
| 2. believe it | 7. hunger for it |
| 3. take it in | 8. joy and rejoice in it |
| 4. practice it | 9. share it |
| 5. experience it | |

[Acts 2:41 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴¹“So then, those who had **received** his word were baptized; and that day there **were added** about three thousand souls.”

Acts 2:41 (KJV)

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

3. Note the statement: “They that gladly received his word.” To “gladly” (*asmenōs*) receive *means* “with pleasure, to embrace with anticipation”. Not everyone present received it. Some were there for the wrong reasons and others were closed-minded and disinterested. Still others simply refused to believe and rejected the Word. **But they who received God's Word became the very first body of believers, the first church.**

4. Note that they were baptized: the idea is immediate baptism (see below [Deeper Study # 2, Baptism—Acts 2:38](#) for discussion). Note also the large number: three thousand “were added” to the 120 disciples.

Acts 4:4 (NASB)

⁴“But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

Acts 6:7 (NASB)

⁷“The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”

Acts 17:11 (NASB)

¹¹“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.”

Romans 10:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB)

¹³“For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”