

# First Century Christians

## Reading: Acts 2

- One of the ways that we differentiate ourselves from other churches is by referring to our Ecclesia as being “like the first century”
- I thought it would be helpful to remind us of what it really means to be a First Century Christian
- I think it would be good if we all remembered just how fortunate we are that we are connected to this group of believers and worship our Father as Christadelphians
- Let’s take a look at this description we read in Acts 2
- Starting in Verse 42 we see a key phrase:
  - 42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching...
- The first thing we discover about the early Christians is a commitment to the teaching of the Apostles
- The early believers had the advantage of getting to hear the apostles firsthand
- But, we have something that they didn’t have: The Bible!
- They didn’t even have written copies of all the Old Testament Books, to say nothing about easy and ready access to all of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament
- We have access to these same teachings of the Apostles along with easily referenced and even automatically linked connections to the Old Testament
- Godly instruction was very rare and hard to come by, but was very important to them
- If we want to live like First Century Christians then we need to make it a priority in our lives to devote ourselves to Bible Teaching
- Too often people get caught up in the experience of their Religious service and forget the importance of it

- Our relationship with God has to be a Bible-centered relationship
- Nothing else is as important as this
- It's more important than our relationships with other Members, the quality of our Exhortations, or how connected we feel to the work of the Holy Spirit
- First Century Christians never made personal experience the touchstone of their faith
- They understood that the Bible is God's main tool for renewing his people in the image of Christ
- Let's continue reading in Verse 42, there is something else that the First Century Christian devoted themselves to:
  - 42) ...the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
- While Bible Study was the first and most important aspect of the life of a First Century Christian, it certainly didn't stop there
- The Bible introduces us to two Commandments, given to us by the Lord Jesus himself
- Baptism and the Memorials
- They are not optional
- Even though participation in these sacraments does not save anybody, they are essential to our salvation
- It is not getting into a pool of water that brings forth salvation; however, entering into the baptismal pool opens up access to the salvation that Jesus gives us
- Likewise it is not by eating the bread and drinking the cup that we are saved, but rather, eating and drinking signifies that we understand that we have been saved and are grateful for that
- In addition to the Memorial Table, we benefit greatly in our life through constant and active fellowship with believers who are walking the same road as we are
- This is not just about friendly relationships and hearing nice things said about you

- True Fellowship is much more than just socializing
- True Fellowship is helpful and beneficial to our spiritual growth – Even in times when we don't really want to hear it
- True Fellowship operates much like a family, which also means there are times where confrontation is necessary
- This takes the form of Ecclesial Discipline, and the First Century Christians weren't afraid to practice Ecclesial Discipline for the good of the whole congregation and most especially for the spiritual welfare of the erring believer
- Prayer, too, was a vital element of a First Century Christian, and should be a major part of our lives as well
- Not just prayers shared here at the Ecclesia, but a vibrant and healthy personal prayer life as well
- Let's look at the next verse:

43) And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

- Joy, reverence, and a sense of awe characterized the worship of the believers in the New Testament Ecclesia
- They had a grasp of how high and holy God is
- As First Century Christians, therefore, we also need to be concerned about reverent worship
- However, reverence does not mean that we are restricted to a particular style of music or structure
- In fact, every worship service should be a joyful celebration of the mighty acts of God through the Lord Jesus Christ
- Although worship services ought to be dignified, it is not right for worship services to be dull
- Now it is possible for dignity to be dull and for joy to be irreverent, but the pattern with the First Century Christians does not set dignity and joy in opposition to one another

- The First Century Christians were filled with awe because the Lord Jesus was present; there was reverence and rejoicing, formality and informality, structure and absence of structure
- Trumpets sounded and cymbals clanged and other instruments joined a great sound as they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang
- If we truly live like First Century Christians then our worship will focus on truth and engage the minds of those who come
- It may also be emotional in as much as such emotion is a reflection of hearts caught up in wonder and praise
- Let's look at the next verses:
  - 44) And all who believed were together and had all things in common.
  - 45) And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need
- Inherent in True Fellowship is a call to generosity
- In Acts we see that money was collected and given to those in genuine need
- The First Century Christians sought to distribute their resources to those in need at all times and in every circumstance with sacrificial generosity
- Consider their daily life...
  - 46) And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,
  - 47) praising God and having favor with all the people
- What a great testament to them and what a great goal for us
- Receive your food with glad and generous hearts
- Praise God
- Live in Favor with all people

- We may remember to pray before our meals, but can it really be said that we are receiving our food with a glad and generous hearts?
- I might be glad to eat, but am I generous?
- Do I share what I have with those around me?
- Praising God entails much more than singing the occasional hymn here on a Sunday morning
- For the First Century Christians they found ways to praise God daily, as day by day they attended the temple and visited each other in their homes
- Let's commit ourselves to visiting each other more, and making sure that those visits include praise to our Heavenly Father and not just socializing...
- How well to you live up to their example of living in favor with all the people?
- Even if it was just referring to all the people in the Ecclesia we sometimes fall short
- But, if it is referring to living in favor with ALL people then we all have a ways to go in improving all of our relationships at work, in our neighborhood and with our families that are not in the Truth
- And look what happened!

47) And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- While the First Century Christians were learning, worshiping, and sharing, they were not doing so at the expense of preaching
- We learn here in Acts that the early Ecclesia grew in number daily
- Who did the adding?
- It was God
- All believers are God's Children; therefore, He is the one who is responsible to add members to the Ecclesia
- God typically does this through the preaching of the Word, worship, and the voice of believers spreading the good news of the gospel

- First Century Christians didn't rely on slick methods, programs, packets, ideas and schemes
- They just presented sound doctrine and trusted in God to handle the results
- We don't need to worry about trying to convince people to come to God, we just need to focus on living our lives as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ
- And the Lord will add to our number day by day those who are being saved...
- If we live like the Brothers and Sisters did in the First Century we will be blessed in our lives
- And in our Ecclesia