

## Unique Features of the N.T. Church

### Their Loyalty

*“They first gave themselves to the Lord” (2 Cor. 8:5).*

#### Introduction:

1. The Lord’s church as described in Scripture is unique. When compared to modern the religious organizations it is different. It is distinct.
2. When compared to modern complicated religious organizations, the N.T. church seems instead to be almost nievely simple and uncomplicated.
3. Its leaders were generally not well educated. They were tax-collectors and fishermen. Many, if not most of them were poor, so poor that some who owned property sold it and gave it to the others. They did not have any T.V.’s, radios, computers or Internet service. And yet, they not only effectively impacted the world of their day and age with the message of Christ, they effected the course of history in such magnificent ways that now 2000 years later we are who we are as a result of their influence.
4. Who are these people and what is unique about them that gave them such ability to change the course of history?
5. When I compare what is said of them in the N.T. with the churches of today I see that they were unique in various ways. Their worship was different. Their work was different. Their organization was different. And as this series progresses it is my plan to examine some of these differences.
6. But I kept asking myself, “Why were they different?”
7. I think I have found the answer in 2 Cor. 8:5 in a comment that Paul made about some of these people who lived in Macedonia.
  - a. There were some Christians in Judea who were in need.
  - b. Paul had written to the Christians at Corinth to “lay by in store on the first day of every week” (to take up a collection) to help the needy ones in Judea.
  - c. They had begun doing this and now Paul wrote to them a second time, encouraging them to continue what they had begun and telling them that he was on his way to pick up what they had collected to take it to Judea.
  - d. In his encouragement to them he tells of the churches of Macedonia that out of their poverty they had given, begging for the favor of being able to participate.
  - e. Paul said, “They first gave themselves to the Lord.”
8. Giving self to the Lord may be the most important commitment that anyone can make. And I believe that it was this level of **loyalty** that made these people have an impact on the world completely out of proportion to their limited education, their poverty and their lack of modern communication methods.
9. What brought about this kind of loyalty?

#### Discussion:

- I. Their loyalty was generated in response to the kindness of God.
  - A. Each of these people had heard the message of God’s kindness expressed on the

cross (Titus 3:3-7; Rom. 2:4).

1. Such kindness explodes people's hearts.
  2. We are touched by God's graciousness.
  3. Before we are skeptical. Untrusting. Suspicious. Weary. Trying to look out for ourselves lest we be taken advantage of.
  4. But then there is this great manifestation of kindness—Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).
- B. God is completely and absolutely trustworthy.
1. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).
  2. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31).
- C. It is permanent.
1. Scripture reveals that he has always been for us. Plan for our redemption. The reason for studying Scripture is to increase our faith in the trustworthiness of our God.
  2. Specific promise "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

II. In the N.T. church their loyalty was demonstrated in their respect for the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

- A. Their loyalty was built upon a confession that Jesus is the Son of God (Matt. 16:16ff).
1. It is not just the confession of the fact.
  2. It is an acknowledgement of his Lordship (1 Tim. 6:13; Matt. 27:11).
  3. Every member of the Lord's church makes Jesus Lord in their life because he is the Son of God, the perfect expression of God's kindness and faithfulness toward us. These are people who "give themselves first to the Lord."
- B. Baptism is in expression of this loyalty.
1. Baptism is a burial. The old self is crucified (Rom. 6).
  2. Like Jesus gave himself to the Father's will in his death, so we too give ourselves completely over to God at the time of our baptism.
  3. Baptism is an expression of complete and total reliance upon God (Col. 2:12)
  4. Jesus expressed this kind of loyalty to His Father when he gave himself on the cross (Matt. 26:42; Mk. 14:36: "Not what I will, but what You will."). Such complete and total trust results in resignation to His will. This is the faith that saves.
- C. This faith (loyalty) expresses itself in on-going obedience (resignation to His will).
1. "Here Lord I give myself away 'tis all that I can do."
  2. Israel failed to enter Canaan because they failed to have the kind of faith (trust) that obeyed in confidence (Heb. 3:12-19).
- D. What makes N.T. Christians different is that they give their loyalty to Christ.
1. They do not give their loyalty to some religious organization.
  2. They do not give their loyalty to some great religious leader.
  3. They do not give their loyalty to some denomination.

### III. Results of this total and complete resignation to the Lord.

- A. Personal pride is crushed.
  - 1. It is not about personal exaltation. It is about the greatness of God.
  - 2. Pride in buildings, size, appearance, etc. become insignificant. All that matters is that the Lord is recognized.
  - 3. People are now free to be servants.
- B. Self-will gives way to God's will.
- C. Thus God is glorified.
- D. We experience all the blessings that God has to offer. But such is not achieved by our greatness. The blessings of God come to us as a by-product of our faith in His kindness.

#### Conclusion:

- 1. There are many unique features of the N.T. church. Their worship is different. Their work is different. Their organization is different.
- 2. But the one thing that sets them apart is their loyalty. It is to God and to God alone.
- 3. They acknowledge Jesus Christ as God's own Son and so submit to Him.
- 4. Indeed all their differences trace back to their allegiance to Christ.
- 5. Will you give yourself to Him in total and complete trust?