

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXVI

April 10, 2016

No. 15

Be Like Jerusalem? (Part 2)

(Jerry Fite)

Quit thinking small brethren, “Let’s be like the Jerusalem church.” Let us set our sights on being 3,000, 5,000, and 10,000 strong. Yes, the church in Jerusalem was a large faithful church.

The church of Christ in Jerusalem remained large in number until it was scattered by persecution to Samaria, and more distant places from Jerusalem like Phoenicia, Antioch of Syria and the island of Cyprus (*Acts 8:4, 11:19*). God used the means of persecution to enlarge His spiritual kingdom. It could only work with those who loved the truth of the Gospel more than life. The Jerusalem church was blessed with a large number of people with such deep conviction.

When people want to be large in number like Jerusalem, do they cry out with equal fervor to be “*stedfast in the apostle’s doctrine*” like the church in Jerusalem (*Acts 2:42*)? Being stedfast in the apostles’ teaching is being strong in the doctrine the apostle’s taught.

Just teach the truth, and leave doctrinal error alone is often the underlying theory of leaders cultivating large member congregations. Bring them in with positive truth, and don’t drive them away by addressing specific error. But this is not what the apostles did in the New Testament.

Peter could have merely taught that the Lord is returning unexpectedly, so get ready by living holy lives (*2 Peter 3:10-11*). But Peter did not just teach the truth; he contrasted it with the present error. He warned of “*mockers*” of truth who would come among them (*2 Peter 3:3*). Peter explicitly points out their questionings: “*Where is the promise of His coming?*” and their error: “*they willfully forget*” the historical flood (*2 Peter 3:5*). Peter concludes, “*Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness*” (*2 Peter 3:17*).

Some pride themselves in not being “an issue-oriented church”. Just preach the truth,

and avoid addressing difficult issues that tend to turn people off. The Jerusalem church publicly discussed the issue of circumcision (*Acts 15*). The Lord’s church is a Scripture –oriented church that openly addresses issues arising from applying Scripture (*cf. Col. 2:14, 16-17*).

How about the unity manifested in the Jerusalem church? “*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul and not one of them said that aught the things which he possesses was his own... (Acts 4:32)*. Land and houses were sold and the entire price was given to the apostles to help fellow disciples in need (*Acts 4:34-35*). Covetous people would soon learn that perverting this true unity would be met with severe punishment (*Acts 5:1-13*).

Is your church stedfast in doctrine, exposing error explicitly, addressing issues and manifesting unity free from worldliness? Or, do you mirror the Jerusalem church in only being large in number?