

Questions / Answers

1. What does the word 'church' in the Bible mean?
The Christians who met together, not the building where they met.
2. Where did the first Christians often meet?
In the home of one of the church members.
3. What did the elders of the church do?
Arranged the services, looked after the members, served the church.
4. What sort of people were appointed to be elders?
Men who were faithful, had a good knowledge of the Gospel.
5. What did the men do in the early church?
Helped with teaching and preaching, read the Bible, said prayers.
6. What did the women do in the early church?
Looked after the poor and sick. Invited Christians to stay in their homes, taught the children about God.
7. What did the early Christians do every day?
Tried to please God, prayed, read the Bible, kept separate from evil.
8. What did the early Christians do when they met every week?
Broke bread and drank wine to remember the sacrifice of Jesus.
9. What did the Emperor Constantine force all the Romans to do?
He forced them all to become Christians.
10. What effect did this have on the Christian church?
People brought pagan religious teaching into Christianity and changed the Truth of God to the teachings of men.

Memory verses

Ephesians 4:4—6 Galatians 1:8 1 Timothy 2:5

Discussion

Is it essential for salvation to believe God's true Gospel? Discuss what false teaching has come into some churches. What is the true Gospel teaching that we should believe?

Writing

Write about what the first Christian churches were like.

CBM Senior Lessons

Lesson 42 First Christian churches



READING Acts 2:41—42; 1 Corinthians 11:23—26; Galatians 1:6—9;
Ephesians 4:4—6;

LESSON

The first Christian churches were groups of Christians who met together to worship God. The first Christians were Jews and Gentiles, men and women, masters and slaves. Their love for Jesus helped them to overcome the differences of their culture and position. The first Christians all believed the same Gospel message, which was taught by the disciples. They all had the same hope of salvation through Jesus Christ. They were all baptised into Jesus. They were all brothers and sisters of Jesus and part of the family of God.

The most important teaching of the first Christian churches was that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus was born to the virgin Mary, he lived a perfect life. He died and was raised to life again. He now has eternal life and is living with God in Heaven. Jesus fulfilled all the promises which God made to His people in the Old Testament. Jesus gave his perfect life so that people from all nations can have their sins forgiven and have the hope of eternal life when Jesus comes back to set up God's Kingdom on the earth. The Christians taught that people must repent and be baptised into Jesus Christ. They must change their lives and live to please God instead of pleasing themselves. The first Christians all believed the same Christian teaching.

The first Christians often met in the home of one of the church members. Many of the groups of Christians were quite small. The word 'church' in the Bible means the Christians who met together, not the building where they met. It was not important where the Christians met. It was very important that they taught the Truth of God's Word and worshipped in the way that pleased God.

Paul preached the Gospel and baptised many people. Paul set up many Christian churches throughout the Roman Empire. Paul usually stayed some time with a new church to make sure that it was properly organised before he left that church to continue on his journeys.

There were elders appointed to organise each church. The elders were men who were faithful and who had a good knowledge of the Gospel. They were often older men. The elders made sure that the services were arranged properly. The church services were held to worship God; everything must be done in the best way possible to give glory to God. The elders looked after all the members of the church. The elders served the church. They were not more important than the other members. They were appointed to help the church. They were not paid for their work.

All the members had a part in helping with the work of the church. Each member helped with whatever they could do best. The men helped with the teaching and preaching. They read the Bible and gave prayers. The women helped look after the poor and the sick. They looked after other Christians who stayed in their homes. They taught the children about God.

Jesus had commanded his disciples to remember his death by breaking bread and drinking wine. The first Christians did this every week. They remembered the great sacrifice Jesus had made for them. They thanked God for His salvation through Jesus. They confessed their sins and promised to try harder to please God. The Christians broke bread to remember the body of Jesus given on the cross. They drank wine to remember the blood of Jesus shed for their sins. The Christians read the Bible. They encouraged each other. They sang hymns and prayed together. The service was simple. They did not have a special man to lead their services. All the men who could, helped with the readings, Bible talks and prayers. There were no special clothes or complicated rituals. The first Christians all worked together to serve and worship God.

The first Christian churches were like a large family. They were all brothers and sisters in Jesus. They all helped each other. Some of them sold their houses and land and shared their money with others in need. Paul collected money from many of the churches he set up to help the poor Christians at Jerusalem.

The Christians had very high moral standards. They did not take part in the immoral living of the people around them. The Christians kept themselves separate from the evil in the world they lived in. The Christians led simple lives. They tried to please God instead of themselves. They prayed to God every day. They read and discussed God's Word. They enjoyed meeting together to talk about the great salvation which God has promised when Jesus comes back to set up God's Kingdom on the earth. The most important thing in the lives of the first Christians was their hope of God's salvation through Jesus. It should be the most important thing in our lives.

Paul and the disciples taught that it is very important indeed that the Gospel message does not change. The teaching of the Bible is God's Word. We must not listen to the ideas of men instead of the teaching of God. The Gospel message is simple and clear. It is men's ideas that have made Christian teaching complicated. We must keep to true Christian teaching.

The Gentile Christians came from pagan religions. Some of the first Christians liked the pagan ideas they believed before they became Christians. They wanted to keep some of these ideas. They began to add some of the pagan ideas to the Christian Gospel. This caused many problems. Paul wrote to many churches and told them that it is very wrong to change the Gospel of God and to teach men's ideas instead of God's.

About 300 years after the first Christian churches were set up, there was a Roman Emperor called Constantine. Constantine made Christianity the official Roman State religion. He forced everyone to become a Christian. It is a very important decision to become a Christian. It is a life changing decision and promise to commit the rest of one's life to God. It is wrong to force people to become Christians. It must be a person's own choice.

The Roman people were used to worshipping lots of gods. They had many feasts when they enjoyed a riotous time with wine and women. The Romans did not want to change to the simple Christian religion. Constantine forced the Roman people to call themselves Christians. They continued to keep their old pagan feasts, but they pretended they were keeping Christian feasts. For example, Christmas was originally an old pagan feast.

The Roman people also wanted to keep their own religious beliefs. Constantine forced them to become Christians. But he could not force them to believe the Christian teaching. Over time the people added their own beliefs to true Christian teaching. They added Greek and Roman religious ideas to the Christian teaching. Many of these false ideas are still part of the teaching of many churches today. They are **not** the teaching of God and the Bible.

Paul taught that it was extremely important to believe what God has taught us. We should believe God's teaching, not men's ideas. It is just as important for us today. We should always compare what churches teach with what the Word of God in the Bible teaches. There is only one Truth. Make sure you keep and believe true Christian teaching.