

DOES THE CHURCH THAT BEGAN ON PENTECOST STILL EXIST TO DAY AND HAS IT EXISTED SINCE PENTECOST?

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There are two readings from the Scriptures that will serve as background information for this short article. These are found in **Matthew 16:13-19** and **Acts 2:47**.

Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18** that "...I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH..." In **Acts 2:47** we notice that the saved were added to "THE CHURCH" and this was done on a daily basis according to the text. The church spoken of in **Matthew 16:18** and **Acts 2:47** are one and the same. The church had the promise of His presence, (**Matthew 28:20**), conditioned upon their teaching "ALL." Those who were taught and were baptized into Christ had the responsibility to continue in the "APOSTLES' DOCTRINE" (**Acts 2:42**). It was the marching orders of the Lord's church. Our Lord had prayed for the apostles in **John 17:20** when He said to the Father, "NEITHER PRAY I FOR THESE ALONE, BUT FOR THEM ALSO WHICH SHALL BELIEVE ON ME THROUGH THEIR WORD." Therefore, everyone that came under the banner of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was to "CONTINUE IN THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE." They had no choice if they would remain true to the Lord. The prophet Daniel wrote about five hundred years before the church had its beginning that "THE GOD OF HEAVEN SET UP A KINGDOM, WHICH SHALL NEVER BE DESTROYED....AND IT SHALL STAND FOR EVER" (**Daniel 2:44**). Therefore, no group, falling short of this, can claim His presence. The church was first comprised of the 12, the 120 and those who had obeyed the teaching of both Jesus and John the Baptist who were baptized for the remission of sins as **Mark 1:3, 4** indicates as well as **John 4:1, 2**. The church had its beginning in Jerusalem (**Isaiah 2:3**), but it would not only be for Jerusalem. The Word was to be taught in every hamlet and village all over the world and that command is still there for us because we have obeyed the "APOSTLES' DOCTRINE".

WHAT BECAME OF THIS CHURCH?

Under apostolic leadership it multiplied numerically (cf. **Acts 2:47; 4:4, 32; 6:7**). It extended geographically (**Acts 8:5; 12:10**; Antioch, **11:21** then to Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Derbe, Lystra, Pamphylia, Perga, Europe (**Acts 16**) Thessalonica, Phoenicia, Syria, Athens, Greece and Rome. It increased influentially rocking entire communities and countries and was spoken of as "TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN" (cf. **Acts 17:6**).

The church was the most amazing spectacle of history from the human standpoint: the most inexplicable accomplishment of all time was the triumph and growth of this early church. It was a small group, despised, uneducated (in the eyes of the world), unendowed materially, etc. Nothing like the church had ever been before or after.

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Some ponder in their minds the question “What became of the church historically?” After the death of the apostles the church remained the same because they adhered to the apostles’ doctrine. Men attempted to defile it (cf. **II Peter 2:1, 2; II John 7-11; Jude 3**). The first departure was one man made – Diotrephes (3 John). There is the ever present danger of tangents both then and now. There were Metropolitan bishops some warring with each other. Actual apostasy began at such a time with the Nicene Creed in 323 with the uniting of the church and the state in 325. The pope was declared the head in 533, by 666 the papacy was complete. This was the going out from the church (cf. **1 John 2:19**). The Dark Ages existed from about 400 to 1400. The Bible was forbidden to the people; there were indulges; the inquisition; ignorance; superstition and etc. Through all this conflict the remnant church existed.

Then came the period of reformation: there was printing – 1440, Renaissance – 1450, Luther and others. Their attempt, though vital, was not yet a true reproduction of the early church. There was the period known as the restoration that began in 1809. It is here that the remnant speaks out and walks out, thus, in many communities we see churches like those of the New Testament.

Someone may ask “What is required to reproduce that church today?” Recognition of the supreme authority of Jesus Christ (cf. **Matthew 28:18-20**) and believing that authority it is necessary to repudiate all human authority. There is the requirement of simply and only and entirely accepting the terms of the Gospel for salvation and entrance into the church. No voting! No creeds (cf. **II Timothy 3:16-17**).

There must be the reproduction of local churches on New Testament times, strictly according to pattern (cf. **Hebrews 8:5**). As to the organization there are to be elders to rule under the authority of Christ as well as deacons (**Colossians 1:18**). As to name, individual – **Acts 11:26**; corporate **Romans 16:16**. The worship of the New Testament must be duplicated today.

What became of the early church? It has lived now nearly 2,000 years. In Christ it will never cease until He has delivered it up to the Father (cf. **I Corinthians 15:24**). It exists today in Christ and over the world comprising all obedient believers who have been added by the Lord. No statistics can be made of it because the number is in heaven. It is destined to continue as long as this world shall stand and then it will become the church eternal.