

Chapter 4:31-5:16

“The State of the Early Church”

Summary

- Picks up immediately following the previous lesson
- Takes place in Jerusalem
- Perhaps within a year or so after Pentecost

Outline

- I. The State of the Early Church - 4:31-37
 - A. The power of the Church - vs. 31
 - B. The closeness of the Church - vs. 32
 - C. The mission and power of the Church - vs. 33
 - D. The generosity of the Church - vs. 34-35
 - E. The example of Barnabas (yes, that Barnabas) - vs. 36-37
- II. Ananias and Sapphira - 5:1-11
 - A. The devious plot - ch. 5:1-2
 - B. Peter confronts Ananias - vs. 3-4
 - C. Ananias expires - vs. 5-6
 - D. Peter confronts Sapphira - vs. 7-10
 - E. The Church learns from their example - vs. 11
- III. The Spread of the Church’s Influence - vs.12-16
 - A. The public ministry of the Apostles - vs. 12-13
 - B. The result of their ministry - vs. 14
 - C. The people acknowledging the power - vs. 15-16

How The Early Church Worshipped

- Characteristics of the Assembly
 - In private homes or in the open air - Acts 2:46, Philemon vs. 2
 - Met on Sunday - Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2
 - Possibly could meet both around dawn and in evening
- Elements of the Service
 - Singing - Ephesians 5:19
 - Prayer - 1 Corinthians 11:4-5
 - Instruction or Preaching - 1 Corinthians 14:26
 - Lord’s Supper - 1 Corinthians 11:20-29
- Pliny the Younger, Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia from 111-113
 - In letter to Emperor Trajan
 - “...they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food--but ordinary and innocent food.”

- Justin Martyr (lived 100-165 A.D.)
 - One of the earliest Christian apologists and gave one of the oldest descriptions of a Christian church service.
 - Write his *First Apology* to emperor Antoninus Pius around 155 A.D.
 - Note - *When reading very early church writings, you must remember that their terminology and culture are not always the same as ours. Also remember that their doctrinal positions or statements have not been refined as ours have been through the centuries. You must also usually take into account who is doing the translating and the source of the manuscripts.*
 - "But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized [illuminated] person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to γενοιτο [so be it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion." - *First Apology*, chapter 65
 - "And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration." - *First Apology*, chapter 67