

The common bond between all groups was the Lord Jesus, and the teaching of the apostles.

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fittingly framed together develops into an holy temple in the Lord: 22 **In whom you are also built together** for God's dwelling through the Spirit.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in: the apostles' teaching ...

The only historically authentic source of information on this is the New Testament. Creeds and articles of faith are man-made and fallible. The New Testament is the only reliable authority on matters of faith, worship and Christian living.

2 Pet. 1:3 According as his divine power has given to us all things that relate to life and piety, through the knowledge of him who has called us by his glory and virtue:

2 Pet. 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; to which you do well that you take notice, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arises in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is anyone's private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy did not come in old time by the man's will: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the mutual salvation, it was needful for me to write to you, and implore you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

TEST EXERCISE

Write a letter to your friend explaining from the Bible how the church was organized.

NOTE

"supervisors" (Greek: επισκοποι) is sometimes translated by the words "bishops" and "overseers". They are also described elders (πρεσβυτεροι) and as "shepherds and teachers" (ποιμενας και διδασκαλους) this last sometimes translated "pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11 A.V.)

Using the King James Authorized Version (A.V.) compare the words in brackets in: 1.Peter 5:1-4 ("elders", "flock", "oversight" "chief Shepherd"), Acts 20:17 ("elders") & 28 ("flock", "overseers", "feed" i.e. like a shepherd) Titus 1:5 ("elders") & 7 ("bishop") and 1 Timothy 3:2 ("apt to teach").

The supervisors were responsible for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. They would also chose "servants" sometimes translated "deacons". These would assist in the physical needs of the congregation, 1 Timothy 3:8-10. The apostles stated the qualifications but the congregation did the choosing, Acts 6:1-3.

In Ephesians 4:11, "apostles", "prophets" and "evangelists" are also mentioned. Evangelist means "preacher of good news" they were sent out by congregations to preach the gospel in new territory, Acts 21:8, 2 Timothy 4:5, Acts 16:1-3, 1 Timothy 4:14 and Acts 13:2-3. The apostles and prophets of Christ passed away once the word of God was established. This is covered in the next study

Authentic Christianity

STUDY 08 SIMPLICITY IN ORGANISATION

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Study 8 SIMPLICITY IN ORGANIZATION

Those the Lord adds to his universal church qualify for membership of the local church.

Acts 2:41 .. they who gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. 42 **And they** continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

They were simply Christians only and churches of the Lord Jesus Christ only.

Romans 16:16 ... The **churches of Christ** ...

Each local group was independent and self governing. When a group had qualified men they were to appoint them as **supervisors (see NOTE)** over their congregation. They would appoint several supervisors in each congregation.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed for them **elders in every congregation** ...

1 Timothy 3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desires to be a supervisor, he desires a good work. 2 A supervisor then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy for dirty money; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One who rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of those who are outside; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint **elders** in every city, as I had appointed you: 6 If any are blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a supervisor must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy money; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

All members were encouraged to fulfil their role in the work and worship of the church.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things which you have heard heard of me amongst many witnesses, you commit the same to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Titus 2:2 That the older men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience.

Ephesians 4:12 For the maturing of the saints, for the work of serving, for the building up of the body of Christ: 13 Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: 14 So that from now on we are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the men's deceitfulness, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, might grow up in all things, in him who is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fittingly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effective working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body to building up itself in love.

There was no distinction between clergy and laity:-

All Christians are God's clergy from the Greek word κληρος - heritage as in 1 Peter 5:3 "Neither as being lords over God's heritage ..."

All Christians are God's laity from the Greek: word λαος - people as in Romans 9:25 "As he also said in Hosea, I will call them My people, which were not My people ..." and in Revelation 21:3 "... they shall be His people, and God Himself shall ... be their God."

There were no diocese, no central authorities, no pyramid organizations. There were no denominations or alliances. Neither Jerusalem nor Rome were headquarters. The Lord's church has no headquarters on earth. Its headquarters is in heaven where the head - the Lord Jesus - is.

Matt. 23:8 But don't you be called Revered One: for one is your Mentor, even Christ; and **all you are brothers**. 9 And don't call any man on the earth your Father: for one is your Father, who is in heaven. ... 11 But he who is greatest amongst you will be your slave. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be debased; and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

The Lord Jesus is the head of the church. He is the only head. His church has no head on earth. There is no organisational hierarchy between Him as head and the local congregation.

Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as **Christ is the head of the church**: and he is the saviour of the body.

Colossians 1:18 And **he is the head of the body, the church**: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; **that in all things he might have the pre-eminence**.