

*Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the most Holy Place... Heb. 9:1-3a*

What was worship like in the first century Christian Church? It's an interesting question particularly in light of verbiage that reads, "Now even the first covenant had regulations." To me it's always seemed as if the author considered what we see as stuffy and formal to be the opposite. I mean when you read Leviticus and understand what Temple services were like there was so much ceremony, it appears to me to be far more elaborate than even our most formal of services. Of course, in coming chapters Hebrews will lay out for us the heavenly realities behind our Divine Services and I think that was the point here.

As to what services in the Early Church looked like, the book of Acts provides a clue in 2:42 which reads, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Breaking that down it becomes evident that these services, normally offered in the living room of a house were never the less recognizable to us. Consider the following:

The Apostles' teaching is there for us in the New Testament Bible. These earliest services would have had sermons that talked about what the Apostles' were saying about Jesus, particularly about how He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scripture. Eventually though written documents began to surface. Already in the mid 60's AD the Apostle Peter is mentioning a collection of letters by Paul, Paul quotes Luke's Gospel as Scripture in one of his letter's to Timothy. In fact, we have a portion of Matthew's Gospel that can be confidently dated to the 50's AD. No doubt too, they would have had three readings followed by shorter devotions at their services because that's what they were accustomed to in their synagogue services.

As for, "the Fellowship that is to say the breaking of bread." I'm sure that any church attending believer can discern that this is referring to the Lord's Supper, particularly if I tell you that the word for fellowship, *koinonia*, in Greek, is the word that we get Communion from. Corporate prayers offered by God's people are mentioned in numerous places throughout the New Testament so these should not surprise us. Sources outside of the New Testament tell us that there was also the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs during these first Christian services as well as a confession and absolution prior to the reception of Holy Communion.

Regardless of the exact form that our services follow today, even the video ones that you are receiving, there is a certain comfort in knowing that the Holy Christian Church has been

gathering in a similar way since the time of Jesus' Ascension. We use His words to Baptize, consecrate elements and forgive sins. We gather in His name and according to His promise to be with us always. Amen.

I wanted to thank all of you for your prayers and concerns on behalf of Penny. She is home and recovering nicely from what was clearly a stomach bug. We will be making a few videos tomorrow, one of the weekend's service, another with an update about how we will try to proceed over the course of the next few weeks. I really wanted to put together a plan to bring in groups for Holy Communion but I think our County's "safer at home" action forbids that. I'll take up that topic further in the video, so please look for that tomorrow.

God's blessings,

Pastor Loughran