

## 2. The Jerusalem Church

### I. The Life of the Church

#### A. Composition

Nucleus (1:13-14):

1. The apostles: the Eleven recognized the need to expand to Twelve again, the symbolic number of God's people. Qualification: a witness of Jesus' entire ministry from his baptism by John to his ascension (1:22). Reason: to bear witness to his resurrection.
2. The women: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Salome (Zebedee's wife, Mary's sister?), Mary wife of Clopas. They had accompanied Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, supporting him out of their own means (Matt 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; Luke 8:2-3; 23:49; 24:10; John 19:25).
3. Mary, Jesus' mother.
4. Jesus' brothers: James (Heb/Gk Jacob), Joseph, Simon, Jude (Heb. Judah, Gk Judas) (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). Jesus made a post-resurrection appearance to James (1 Cor 15:7). Were these really Jesus's brothers:
  - a. full brothers, born to Mary & Joseph after Jesus.
  - b. half-brothers: Joseph's sons from a previous marriage.
  - c. first cousins: James called an apostle (Gal 1:19), presumed to be James son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18) = James the Younger, son of Mary and brother of Joses (Mark 15:40), assumed to be Mary wife of Clopas (=Alphaeus). Standard Catholic view. James the Less.b, c preserve Mary's perpetual virginity.

The community grew rapidly: from 120 (1:15), to 3000 (on Pentecost, 2:41), to 5000 men (4:4).

The believers were all Jewish: Aramaic-speaking Palestinian Jews, Greek-speaking Hellenistic Jews of the Diaspora, proselytes.

The believers were from all levels of society: property-owners, priests, the poor.

#### B. Meeting Places

The believers met in several locations:

1. The Upper Room (τὸ ὑπερῶν Vg *cenaculum* 1:13). Tradition locates several events here:
  - a. the Last Supper: a large upper room (ἀνάγαιον μέγα (Mk 14:15; Lk 22:12; Vg *cenaculum*), a guest room (κατάλυμα Luke 22:11).
  - b. Jesus's post-resurrection appearances (John 20:19-29).
  - c. selection of Matthias to replace Judas.
  - d. gift of Spirit on Pentecost.
  - e. house of John Mark's mother Mary (Acts 12:12). A house in the Upper City (Mt Zion).

Today: the Cenacle (Lat *cenaculum*, “dining room”), a 14th cent. gothic structure.

2. The Temple (2:46). Prayer times 3× daily: morning prayer (*shacharit*), afternoon prayer (*minchah*) and evening prayer (*arvith* or *maariv*), at 3rd, 9th hour, sunset (9am, 3pm, 6pm); *tamid* burnt offering 2× daily, morning and evening (Exod 29:38-39). Gathered in Solomon’s Colonnade (5:12), a portico along the east side of the temple’s outer court. “The early Christian church...saw itself as the place of God’s eschatological presence, destined to supersede the Jerusalem Temple. For the time being, until God should remove the latter, they continued to worship in it, but did not expect a new Temple building” (Bauckham).

3. Individual homes: to eat meals together (2:45).

### C. Names

What non-believers called them:

1. A sect (αἵρεσις): Josephus described Judaism as divided into three sects: Essenes, Sadducees, Pharisees (Ant. 18.1.2). Non-believers referred to the believers as a sect (αἵρεσις 24:14; 28:22), specifically “the sect of the Nazarenes” (24:5), distinct from the sect of the Pharisees (15:5), the sect of the Saducees (5:17). The believers did not see themselves as a Jewish sect.
2. Christians (Χριστιανοί), “followers of Christ”: when the church expanded to a non-Jewish environment, the unbelievers used this term, first in the Gentile city of Antioch (11:26), probably in a derogatory manner.
3. Nazarenes: after Jesus the Nazarene (Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος/ὁ Ναζαρηνός can as well be translated “Jesus the Nazarene” as “Jesus of Nazareth”). Matt 2:23 connects Nazareth and Nazarene, best seen as a reference to the branch (נֶצֶר *netser*) in Isa 11:1. This term is still used for Jesus-followers in the Middle East: Heb. s. נֹצְרִי, *Noṣri*; Arabic s. *Naṣrani*.

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noon, first letter of *Nasrani*, Arabic for Christian

The believers referred to themselves with a variety of names:

1. the brethren (οἱ ἀδελφοί, eg 1:15; 6:3): a family.
2. the believers (οἱ πιστεύοντες, e.g. 2:44); object of faith is Jesus.
3. the disciples (οἱ μαθηταί, 6:1-2), specifically the Lord’s disciples (9:1).
4. the saints (οἱ ἅγιοι, e.g. 9:13, 32, 41).
5. the Way (ἡ ὁδός, 9:2; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14,22).
6. the church (ἐκκλησία *ekklēsia*, e.g. 5:11; 8:1,3). Perhaps best translated as “congregation.” Etymologically derived from ἐκ “out of” + καλέω “call”, i.e. “call out of,” but etymology ≠ meaning. LXX translates Heb. לְקָהָל *qahal*, and עֲרָבָה assembly, congregation of Israel, as συναγωγή, ἐκκλησία; συναγωγή already used for Jewish synagogue . Used both for the believers everywhere (9:31) and for the church in a specific location.
  - a. ἐκκλησία > L *ecclesia*, Fr. *église*, Sp. *iglesia*.
  - b. κυριακός *kuriakos* (the Lord’s) > *kuriakē oikia* (the Lord’s house) > Ger. *kirche*, Sc. *kirk*, Engl. church.

### D. Leadership

#### 1. The Apostles

The apostles (οἱ ἀπόστολοι) = The Twelve, with Peter as spokesman. They selected a male witness to Jesus’s life and resurrection to replace Judas, restoring the number to twelve men. The foundation stones of the new Israel. The apostles remained in leadership until Herod Agrippa I attacked them:

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killed James (John's brother), imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1-5, 43/44).

### 2. James and the Elders

Leadership passed to the elders (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι 11:30, term previously used for Jewish leaders) with James as leader (12:17). Tradition identifies him as the first bishop of Jerusalem. For his observance of the law he became known as James the Just/Righteous (ὁ δίκαιος); for his prayer-life he became known as "camel-knees." He was stoned c. 62 by Jewish leaders for law-breaking.

**Apostolic succession:** unbroken chain of consecrated bishops going all the way back to the apostles. Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran. But no evidence of monarchical bishops till early 2d cent.

**Apostolic see:** an episcopal see (area of a bishop's ecclesial authority; see < L. *sedes*, chair; cf. L. *cathedra* < Gk καθέδρα chair), founded by an apostle: the Twelve, the Seventy (Luke 10:1; cf. 9:1-2). E.g.

- Rome (Peter, Paul). In Catholic theology = the Holy See, the Apostolic See.
- Constantinople (Andrew)
- Alexandria (Mark)
- Antioch (Peter)
- Jerusalem (Peter, James)
- Babylon (Thomas, Batholomew, Thaddeus)
- s. India (Thomas)

What forms the link back to first church: episcopal consecration, or maintenance of apostolic teaching?

## E. Lifestyle

The believers met together to engage in certain activities (2:42-47):

1. devotion to apostolic teaching. A new tradition. Apostolic succession is holding to the teaching of the apostles, not succession of ordination.

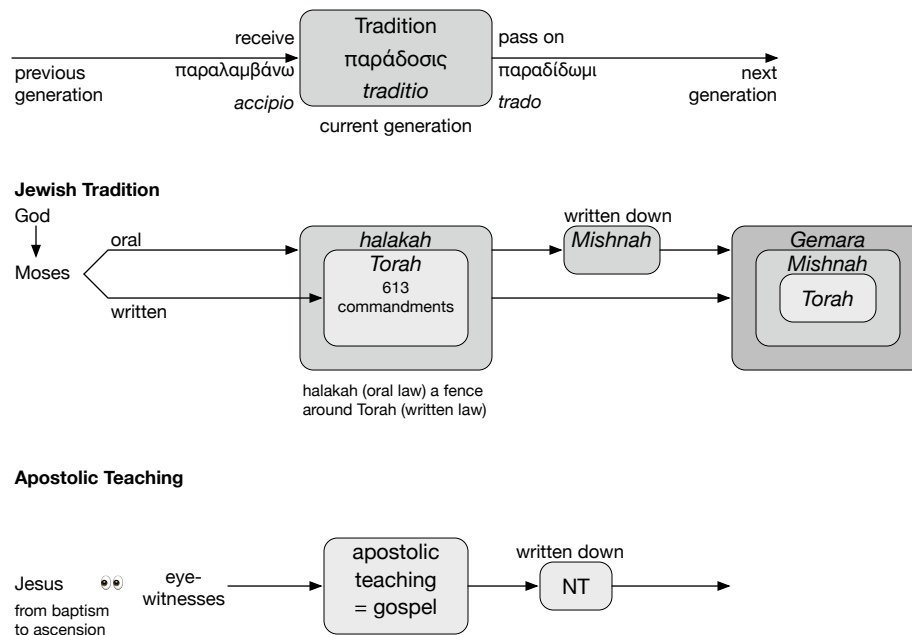


Fig. 2-1: Tradition

“*Tradition* is the living faith of the dead; *traditionalism* is the dead faith of the living” (Jaroslav Pelikan).

2. fellowship (ἡ κοινωνία): they met together (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό 2:1, 44), they had everything in common (κοινός 2:44), they were of one accord (ὁμοθυμαδόν), they ate together (cf. Pharisee חבורה, חבירה *haburah*). They broke the normal conventions of fellowship, especially of table fellowship. They abandoned client-patron relationships.
3. the breaking of bread: table-fellowship across social lines.
4. prayer: following the pattern of Jesus.

The apostles performed signs and miracles (2:43): evidence of God’s authentication, as he had authenticated Jesus.

## II. Opposition

This ideal life of the church did not last for ever. The church was troubled by external opposition and internal conflict.

### A. External Opposition

1. From the Sanhedrin (4:1-31)
2. From the Synagogue of the Freedmen (6:9-15)  
Stephen’s martyrdom.  
Great persecution against the Jerusalem church: all scattered, but apostolic leadership remained.

### B. Internal Conflict

1. Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11): cf. the sin of Achan (Josh 7).
2. Distribution of relief funds to widows (6:1-7)  
grumbling of Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora) against the Hebrews (Aramaic-speaking Palestinian Jews) over favoritism in daily distribution to widows.  
Solution: divide leadership.
  - The Twelve: prayer and the ministry of the word
  - The Seven: ministry of the table