

Title: The Jerusalem Directive
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 Text: Matt. 16:18 & Acts 11:29-30
 Place: DCOG
 Theme: Who Leads the Church?
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Our title this week, “The Jerusalem Directive”, sounds like a Robert Ludlum novel, always a great mystery keying off of a place or an event. In some ways that is our story this week. It has a beginning place and a beginning event.

Ephes. 3:4-5

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, [5] which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

The story revealed to us begins on the Day of Pentecost when the *ekklesia*, begins its Holy Spirit filled existence. Sure, there were people that belonged to God before that event but the “called out assembly of God” begins to function in a new birth experience that flows out of the upper room where the disciples were meeting in Jerusalem.

Beyond the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, most of the New Testament is a story of “local churches” and how God intended for them to function.

I. Of course, it was Jesus who came to lay the foundation and to build His *ekklesia*.

Matthew 16:18

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

When Jesus said this, we know that he was not planning to limit his church to the area of Caesarea Philippi where the

conversation took place. He was referring to the great company of the redeemed.

Rev. 19:6-8

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

[7] Let us rejoice and be glad

and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,

and his bride has made herself ready.

[8] Fine linen, bright and clean,

was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Jesus was anticipating the multitude of local churches that would be established in Judea and Samaria and throughout the Roman Empire—and eventually all over the world.

A. Paul used the term *ekklesia* in a broad sense to refer to believers who became part of the body of Christ anytime from Pentecost to that moment when the church will be face to face with the Savior.

B. Paul also used the term in a universal sense to refer to all first-century believers scattered throughout the Roman world.

Galatians 1:13

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.

- a. Not only persecuting the believers in Jerusalem but those found anywhere.

C. Still, 82 times or 80% of the time Biblical writers were referring to local congregations.

* We have to be careful not to view those “local churches” through the lens of our twenty-first century structural models. In most cases the writers were referring to all professing believers in a particular city or community.

D. To understand the meaning of a local church, we must think in terms of people in relationship. In other words these were people in community. They were called...

- a. Disciples.
 - i. A learner.
 - ii. A follower.

* The Book of Acts speaks to us of disciples who are believers who much more fully understand that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and Savior of the world. These are believers who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Jesus Christ.

- b. They were called “brothers”.
 - i. More than any other word.

*Just remember that the Greek word *adelphoi*, which is used here, is often generically used to refer to both brothers and sisters in Christ.

- ii. Sometimes used more narrowly to refer to local church leaders.

Acts 12:17

Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

Acts 16:2

The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.

Acts 21:17

When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly.

- c. They were called “*hagios*” saints.
 - i. 55 times in the New Testament.
 - ii. Not always living godly lives.
 - iii. Because of their faith in Jesus and their true salvation experience, God viewed them through Christ’s death and resurrection as perfectly *hagios*, or holy.

* In this way God sees all of us in the local church who are truly saved. If He did not, no one could inherit eternal life. Remember, it is salvation by grace through faith and not by works.

- iv. Still it is God’s will that all of us become holy, as He is holy.

1 Peter 1:15-16

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; [16] for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

- v. As members in a local church we are to renew our minds.

Romans 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

II. God has the same plan for today.

- A. God’s plan began when Jesus chose and prepared twelve men who were first called “disciples”.
 - a. Later called apostles.

* Notice what he charged them to do...

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

B. Then Jesus returned to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit.

C. And the Jerusalem church set the example.

- a. A replacement for Judas was chosen.
- b. Seven were chosen to serve the church. (To wait on tables)
- c. Elders served as local church leaders.

D. What did these elders look like?

- a. Initially, they were woefully immature.

Luke 22:24

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.

- b. Then Jesus taught them the greatest lesson in their character development...He took the place of a servant and washed their feet.
- c. Jesus was demonstrating the full extent of his love and his coming death on the cross.
- d. They had no clue that they would all forsake him.
- e. This all changed when the Holy Spirit descended upon them.
- f. This event marked the ultimate transformation.

* James, the very man who strategized with his brother and mother to sit on Jesus' right hand in the kingdom, demonstrated the ultimate act of love when he literally shed his own blood in martyrdom.

His brother, John, initially described as one of the sons of thunder became known as the apostle of love.

Conclusion: Though the apostles continued to mature in Christ following the birth of the church, they were definitely different men after the Holy Spirit descended. They became servants of God and of one another. Motivated by the Great Commandment...

Matthew 22:37-39

Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' [38] This is the first and greatest commandment. [39] And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

They began to carry out the Great Commission...

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

While we are not told how the elders/overseers were selected in the church in Jerusalem, we can be certain that the apostles looked for people who shared their commitment to the Kingdom of God.