

CHRISTIAN LIFE DURING THE APOSTOLIC AGE

1. The Spiritual Power of Christianity

When Christianity appeared on the scene of history, it called for a continuing fruitful holy life completely different from all that had preceded it as a life of holiness, peace, and communion with God. It was an eternal life that started with heartfelt renewal and continued to the maximum resurrection. Christianity was superior to all religions in the practicing of virtues and presented the best supposition of God-man's love. No philosophy could renew and conquer the world as the Christianity did and is still doing by the Holy Gospel. The Christian life was led by her head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it follows His Holy steps and so beyond count the number of murders, adulteresses, thieves, and evils who changed their life through practical Christian faith. Yes, indeed Christianity could change the wild wolves to humble lambs!

2. Christianity and the individual:

The Christian plan to change life usually starts internally, from the heart unlike all other philosophies. The main goal of Christianity is the individual life through and with the family and whole society will change to the betterment. Christianity considered the individual as the nucleus of the family and the community and so it cared about the individual's life and its renewal toward the perfection. The life of the Apostles and early believers reached a rank of holy life no one had attained before including the Jewish righteous. Their lives were daily communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. They presented through their lives role models for virtues which were not known before to anyone such as meekness, humbleness, and love of one's enemies. They were light and salt for the world keeping their Master's Words and showing His light to those who were sitting in darkness of sin. They were a non-written Gospel or you can say a living Gospel!

3. Christianity and Women

The effect of Christianity was not limited to men's life but extended to women. Christianity honored women unlike Judaism and paganism. Woman inherited salvation as man had (1 Peter 3:7 and Galatians 3:28). Christianity honored woman and presented her as a man's helper.

The Virgin St. Mary is the point of change in woman's history, through her, her gender has been honored and blessed attributed to her giving birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam. She presented an exemplarily life of purity, meekness, humbleness, obedience, and submission to God. In addition to St. Mary, the Holy Gospel presented many women of honor as denoted through their holy lives, the Lord Jesus Christ's fellowship and ministry such as Mary Magdalene, Salome; St. John and St. James' mother, Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, and those who followed the Lord Jesus Christ to the Holy Cross (Luke 24:1-10).

In between the Glorious Resurrection and Pentecost, St. Mary and the other women joined the holy Apostles in prayer in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14). This high room which became the first Church in the world was in a woman's house; St. Mary the mother of St. Mark the Apostle (Acts 12:12). From the beginning women served in Church (1 Corinthians 11:11-12).

3. Christianity and marriage:

As Christianity honored woman, it honored and sanctified the family life and marriage. It prohibits polygamy and considered monogamy the Godly ideal model. Thus matrimony was holy and in which each member had responsibilities and rights. Marriage in Christianity is a Divine Sacrament and not just human developmental work (Matthew 19:4-6). Man-woman union in marriage is similar to the Christ-Church union (Ephesians 5:28-33). Aquila and Priscilla were good examples for the Christian marriage as they helped St. Paul in his ministry and their house became a Church (Acts 18:2

&26). In the Christian family the children-parent relationship is based on Agape love not on authority and violence as was the case among Romans. It was a relation based on parents' love and children's obedience which brought about love. St. Paul presented the woman to be saved through her giving birth to Godly children that through them the world would be saved. One of the evidences of the holiness of marriage was that the Church prohibited divorce except for marital immorality, unlike among Jews and pagans where divorce was very common for almost every reason.

One of the problems that faced Christianity in the Apostolic Age was the mixed marriage such as one partner being Christian and the other being Jew or pagan. So one partner might convert to the Christian faith but the other partner might not and so the Christian partner might think his/her marriage was not holy according to the Holy Bible. However, the Church allowed for continuity of this kind of marriage and considered it holy but at the same time she did not allow for any Christian to initiate a mixed marriage and considered any Christian who began a new mixed marriage as a sinner and should be excommunicated (1 Corinthians 7:12-14, 7:39 and 1 Peter 3:1).

4. Christianity and virginity

Since the beginning of the Apostolic Age many Christians loved to live the life of virginity and asceticism encouraged by the praising of such life by the Lord (Matthew 19:10-12) and it looks like the life of angels (Matthew 22:30 and Luke 20:35). In a question directed to St. Paul by the Corinthians about virginity and marriage St. Paul praised the life of virginity (1 Corinthians 7:1-38). Life of sexual abstinence extended also to married people and so St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about marital life and how it should be (1 Corinthians 7:3-7). During this time "spiritual" marriage appeared where a man and woman would live in the same house as brother and sister without sexual relation.

The life of St. Mary and her giving birth to the Lord, life of St. John the Baptist and that of the Lord himself encouraged the life of virginity as the believers are the temple for the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:15-19). What St. John revealed about the rank of the virgin in the heavenly Jerusalem was another encouraging factor for life of virginity (Revelation 14:1-5). The Church and the Church's fathers honored the life of virginity and thus allowed virgins to set in the first rows in the Church before other believers. Re-marriage prohibits ordination of priests, or bishops (1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6).

5. Christianity and society

Christianity called for Agape love for all people beyond the geographical or physical boundaries removing the barriers between different races Jews, Romans, Gentiles, Greeks, and Barbarians as all nations are created from one (Acts 17:26). The Christian spirit is universal beyond national spirit so all believers are one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32).

6. Spiritual gifts

The spiritual gifts in the Church during the Apostolic Age included: (1) Wisdom and Knowledge (1 Corinthians 14:8); (2) Teaching (Romans 12:6 & 7); (3) Prophecy (Acts 11:28, 1 Corinthians 14:25, Acts 13:1 & 2 and 1 Timothy 4:14); (4) Tongues (Acts 2:1-13, 10:46, 19:6 and 1 Corinthians 12-14); (5) Interpretation (1 Corinthians 12:4-10); (6) Administration (1 Corinthians 12:28); (7) Pasturing (Ephesians 4:11-12); and (8) Miracles (Hebrews 2:4, 1 Corinthians 12:4, 8-10, 2 Corinthians 12:12).

7. Categories of servants in the Church

Categories of servants in the church during Apostolic Age included: (1) The Apostles (2 Corinthians 8:23, Philippians 2:25, 1 Thessalonians 2:6, Galatians 4:14-15); (2) Prophets (Acts 13:1,

11;28, 21:11, 15:32, 21:9); (3) Teachers ((Romans 12:6 &7); (4) Bishops (1Timothy, 1:7, 3:2-13, 4:13, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:2-3); (5) Priests / Presbyters (Acts 14:23, 20:17, 11:30, 15:4,&23, 16:4, 21:18, 1 Timothy 5:17 &22, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1); (6) Deacons (Acts 6:1-8, 8:5-8 & 26-40); and (7) Women servants / Deacons (Acts 9:36, 21:8-9, Philippians 4:2&3, Romans 16:1,2,4,6,12, 1 Timothy 3:11).