

# Back to Bible Basics

Issue 16

## MARKS OF A GROWING CHURCH

Ian McPherson

On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, when the church began, we see about three thousand people being baptized and added by the Lord to the church. From that day on we see remarkable growth taking place. Two chapters later we read how it grew to about five thousand men (Acts 4:4). On four different occasions after this we see that the church at Jerusalem multiplied (Acts 6:1, 7; 7:17; 9:31).

Although the culture and mindset of people today may not be as conducive to church growth, the characteristics that caused Jerusalem to grow and multiply apply to all time. Below are some of these characteristics that caused this remarkable growth. They are taken from Acts 2:42-47

**STEADFAST:** *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and in prayers."* (Acts 2:42). This shows that the church had many different assemblies which provided opportunity for the church to grow in knowledge of God's word, and strengthen their relationship with each other and with the Lord. The members were present every time the church assembled, whether it was for teaching, fellowship gatherings, taking the Lord's Supper or prayer meetings.

Can we imagine how poorly a football club would perform if its players only turned up for the game, and never attended practice sessions, or other communal activities of the club. In the same way, how could we

ever expect a church to grow whose members only turn up for morning worship and never, or rarely, for Bible class and other assemblies. The assembly is the "heart throb" of the church. Enthusiastic assemblies are the main springboard of evangelism.

**FEARFUL** *"And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles".* (Acts 2:43). The church cannot grow without each member having a healthy fear of God. *For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Hebrews 10:30-31). We often think of only the people of the world being judged, but these verses concern the judgement of "His people". God's wrath was a powerful motivator to Paul in his evangelism. He said "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ..." (2 Corinthians 5:11). Churches will only grow when members have a healthy fear of God.

**CARING** *"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."* (Acts 2:44-45). The church is more than an institution, but a family. The Jerusalem church had an acute interest in the welfare of its members. Benevolence alone will not convert souls, but without it a church is dead (1 John 3:17; Revelation 2:4, James 1:27, Galatians 6:10)

**UNITED** *"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."* (Acts 2:46). David said long ago *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."* (Psalms 133:1). There is nothing that stifles church growth more quickly than disunity.

**INFLUENTIAL** *"Praising God, and having favour with all the people"* (Acts 2:47a). The church cannot grow in isolation, its light must be seen by the community (Matthew 5: 13-14). The Jerusalem church were living as "peculiar" people in the community (1 Peter 2:9), showing Christ to the lost world.

**EVANGELISTIC** *And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* (Acts 2:47b). The members were busily preaching the gospel. Even after being

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scattered by persecution, the members of the church were still soul conscious, planting churches and preaching and teaching God's word (Acts 8:4).

If the church wants to grow today, these same things that motivated the Jerusalem church must motivate us. Millions are dying each day without the gospel.

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## WAS CHRIST A CREATED BEING?

**Brett Rutherford**

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the Christ (The Word) was the first of God's creation. They claim that Christ was endowed with creative power to form all other living creatures. The Witnesses also teach that the Christ was not an eternal being who shared Jehovah's divine nature.

In order to protect their view of the nature of Christ, the Jehovah's Witnesses have published their own version of the Bible. The creators of the Witnesses' New World Translation have sought to modify and distort every passage of Scripture that implies, or states, that Christ was eternally the equal of Jehovah. For example, in John chapter one, the producers of the New World Translation have inserted the indefinite article "a" before the reference to Christ (The Word) as God. John 1:1 in the NWT reads, "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the word was **a god.**" It is evident from the rest of the chapter that the person called "The Word" in verse one is the same person who became the Christ. Since the Witnesses cannot deny that John describes the Christ (Word) as "God" in chapter one, they have to diminish the impact of this statement by inserting the indefinite article "a" before any use of the word "God" in connection with Christ (The Word).

The indefinite article "a" before the word "God" in verse one of John chapter one is an addition to the original Greek text that is not warranted by the grammar or the context of the passage. The inconsistent use of the indefinite article by the translators of the NWT becomes very clear when one considers their rendition of Isaiah 9:6. In the NWT this verse is rendered as "For there has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule will come to be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." Clearly, the child that is "born to us" Who would be called the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" is Jesus Christ. Even the Jehovah's

Witnesses that I have spoken to have reluctantly admitted that Isaiah 9:6 is a prophetic reference to the Christ. The NWT translators forgot to add the indefinite articles "a" or "an" before the titles given to Christ in this verse. Their negligence has resulted in a translation that contradicts itself on the nature of Christ.

Changing verse one of John chapter one to make it appear that Christ the Word is **a god**, and not the God, creates another problem for the Jehovah's Witnesses. This rendering of the text suggests that there are two divine natures instead of one. In other words, the NWT is teaching that there is a greater and a lesser divine nature. There is Jehovah God (who possesses the greater divine nature), and then there is Jesus Christ (who possesses the lesser divine nature). This view of the nature of Christ makes the Jehovah's Witnesses guilty of polytheism.

The Bible teaches that there is only one God (Divine Nature), and that there are three Persons Who share that Divine Nature - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:5,6; Acts 5:1-5). This is why the Christ is prophetically referred to as the "Mighty God," and the "Eternal Father" in Isaiah 9:6. It is the reason why Jesus told Philip, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (John 14:9-10).

The three Persons of the Godhead are not only unified by Their nature, but They are also unified in character, mission, purpose and authority (Matthew 28:19, 20; John 14:10).

**11<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Mersey Bluff Church of Christ  
Far Above Rubies  
Ladies' Retreat**

**August 23 – 24, 2013**

**Guest Speaker:  
Barbara Tabe (Hobart)**

**Theme: "The King's Daughters"**

**Held at Camp Banksia, Port Sorell  
(approximatey 15 minutes from Devonport)**

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