

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

LESSON TWO = *The Problems Facing the Early Church*

Bible Class Series by Ray Reynolds (12/8/10)

Introduction: In our last lesson we noticed that the congregations of the Lord's people were collectively called the churches of Christ (**Romans 16:16**). We noticed the prophecies concerning the church and the environment where the church was born. In this lesson we want to identify some of the problems the church would have to face immediately after it was established in **Acts 2**. Once we have done that we will be able to do a survey of each of the congregations that were established and mentioned in the New Testament. Let's study together

Discussion:

I. The Church Faced Intellectual Problems

Docetism = the belief that Jesus was a phantom, only appeared to suffer and die

Dualism = the belief that Jesus only appeared to be human, could not be human

Asceticism = the belief that one must practice self-denial, fasting, personal suffering, etc.

Antinomianism = the belief that it was senseless to deny the flesh

Gnosticism = the belief in salvation by supernatural knowledge

Judaizers = a sect of people that rejected Christ as the Messiah, Christians seen as heretics

II. The Church Faced Cultural Problems

The relationship between church and state

The division of racial and social structures

The issues of slavery and owning property

The inward strife of the fellowship of the believers

The relentless attacks of Satan and his demons

The unlawful marriages and unlawful divorces

III. The Church Faced Religious Problems

The Jewish faith was divided already

The universality of the nations into the faith

The holidays and practices of the Jews

The problems of Hellenism in their culture

The pagan worship in their cities

The worship of the Roman emperor

IV. The Church Faced Practical Problems

The persecution of the opposing forces

The issue of group assembly and fellowship

The financial support of missions, local work, missionaries, preachers, and elders

Conclusion: We can clearly see that history shows the wisdom and providence of God. We should trust Him to provide direction for the church today. We should seek to be a part of the spread and progress of His earthly kingdom, the church. It is my prayer that by studying about these wonderful congregations of the Lord's people that we will see our place in the kingdom.