

Some Lesser Known Churches of the New Testament

Romans 16:1 - I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

As we have considered the churches of the New Testament over the past weeks, we have focused on those churches which are either prominent in the book of **Acts**, churches to which New Testament epistles were written, or both. However, there are some other churches mentioned in the New Testament which do not have the fame and notoriety of these churches. In this study, we desire to look at these “lesser known churches of the New Testament”.

I. The Church at Troas (Acts 20:6-12)

Troas was a city that was in the area where the ancient city of Troy was located, it is thought. The only information that we have about this church is found in the passage above. While these disciples are not specifically called a “church”, it is obvious from what we are told that this was indeed one of the Lord’s local assemblies. We are told that they assembled together on Sunday (“the first day of the week”) for the Lord’s Supper and for a preaching service (**vs. 7**) - quite obviously a church service. Notice about this church service at Troas:

1. It was a service “...**upon the first day of the week...**” (**vs. 7**)

The pattern of God’s people meeting for church on Sunday had already become the norm for God’s people. This started with the very first church service following Christ’s resurrection, which took place on that very day (**John 20:19-23**). Paul indicated that the first day of the week was the common church day in his first letter to the Corinthian church (**I Cor. 16:1-2**). By the time John wrote the book of **Revelation** toward the end of the first century, this day was being referred to as “**the Lord’s day**” (**Rev. 1:10**). We meet on the first day of the week because it is the day of Christ’s resurrection.

2. It was an evening service (**vs. 7**)

This was also the case with the service on the day of Christ’s resurrection (**John 20:19**). The Christians in Troas had secured a meeting place in an upper chamber, on the third story (**vss. 8-9**). It has been suggested that most of the Christians were slaves who had to work in the daylight hours, and who thus could only meet for church in the evening and nighttime hours.

3. It was a preaching service (**vs. 7**)

While preaching is downplayed (if not entirely ignored) in many churches today, preaching was the main event in New Testament churches (**I Cor. 1:17,21, 23-24**). In fact, Paul preached until midnight!

4. It was a service to observe the Lord’s Supper (**vs. 7**)

5. The service resulted in Paul performing one of the apostolic miracles (**vss. 9-12**)

Jesus had promised miracle-working power to the apostles and their immediate converts to confirm their message in the days before the Bible was completed (**Mark 16:17-20**). Paul spoke of these as “**signs of an apostle**” (**II Cor. 12:12**), and in raising Eutychus from the dead, Paul performed one of these signs.

II. The Church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)

Cenchrea was the eastern seaport for the city of Corinth in Achaia (southern Greece). Possibly, this church was founded by the church in Corinth.

The significant thing about this church is that a godly woman named Phebe was an important and prominent member; she is called a **“servant of the church which is at Cenchrea”**. The word **“servant”** is from the Greek word *“diakonos”*, which when transliterated becomes the English word “deacon”. This has resulted in a controversy about whether women should be “deaconesses” in local churches. However, when Paul gives the qualifications for deacons, one of those qualifications is that in order to be a deacon, a person must be the husband of one wife (**I Tim. 3:12**). This indicates that the official church office of deacon is to be occupied by men. It also demonstrates that the translators of the King James Bible translated the word correctly in referring to Phebe as a **“servant”** (which is what the word “deacon” means) rather than a “deaconess”. Phebe did not occupy the official position of a church office, but she was a marvelous and godly Christian woman; in fact, it is thought that she was the person that Paul chose to carry his epistle of **Romans** to Rome. How much the church owes to godly women who have served the Lord by serving His church!

III. The Church at Babylon (I Peter 5:13)

While some have taught that the “Babylon” spoken of in this verse was a veiled reference to the city of Rome, there is really no reason to think this (unless one is trying to place Peter in the city of Rome in order to advance the idea that he was a pope). We are of the opinion that Babylon means Babylon, in this passage.

Many Jews still lived in the area of Babylon in New Testament days, having remained in the land of their captivity when others returned to Judah from captivity. This is, we believe, where Peter was when he penned his first epistle, which he addressed to **“the strangers scattered”** throughout various places. This expression (“the strangers scattered”) is an expression which refers to the Jews of the dispersion (i.e., those who had been dispersed away from their land to other places). In Babylon, Jews who were descended from those who stayed after the captivity heard the gospel, a number were saved, and a church was founded in that city. It was there that Peter dwelt when he wrote **I Peter**.

Conclusion - Some of the lesser known churches of the New Testament gave us great lessons and insights into truth.