

## THE HOUSE ALTAR (CHURCH) MOVEMENT

LET'S MOVE FORWARD IN THE LOVE OF IMMANUEL -

JESUS OUR LORD WHO WAS AND STILL IS INDEED

“GOD WITH US”.

The first-century Church sprung forth from the Upper Hall (or room) where the 120 disciples of Jesus had been waiting upon God for His ultimate revelation, namely the baptism with and movement of Holy Spirit which would have kick-started the so-called “Golden” apostolic age.

It should be clear that those disciples of Jesus, who were all serious followers of the crucified and risen Jesus, had, at that stage of waiting upon the fulfilment of Jesus' prophetic direction, no clear idea yet where they were heading except that they were gathered in this seemingly “public” place in Jerusalem for a definite purpose, namely to be equipped with Holy Spirit.

Also, and so that all who would still become involved with the then small “Jesus party”, could receive the selfsame “power from on high”, transforming them and making them bold, faithful and strong witnesses for their Messiah who was, more or less fifty days previously, crucified and “removed from the midst of His own people”, the Jews who, by the time the Jesus movement had erupted, consisted of at least four parties (according to Josephus' records), (1) the Pharisees, (2) the Sadducees, (3) the Essenes and the Zealots, the latter having been that “additional” militant political party that would, due to its fanatical ideals, have landed its adherents time and time again into great trouble with the Roman authorities, individually and party-wise.

Now, without analysing the customs and teachings of the aforementioned Jewish sects, we can sense that each of them was distinguished by their own particular kind of zeal for their God, however, of the three main spiritual sects, the Essenes seem to have been the most peculiar and fanatical, having focused almost squarely on their expectations of the coming of Messiah. Jesus' spectacular ministry would therefore not have escaped their attention, however, and although many scholars have endeavoured to point out their involvement with the Jesus Movement (as I would call it here), there seems to be no real evidence of such involvement on a large scale, namely before the Upper Room event (Acts 2).

We can gather from Josephus that the Judean Essene community consisted of 4000 members and where only 120 disciples of Jesus had heeded Jesus' instruction to “go and wait upon the baptism with Holy Spirit”, namely the Power from on high (Acts 1.8), that this relatively small number of dedicated Jesus followers, had not yet, namely at that stage, consisted *also* of the broader Essene community. We can further see from the Gospels and especially gathered from Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane (Luke's version) that He was “in the temple on a daily basis”, meaning that Jesus was rather Pharisee than Essene. There was never a Pharisaic temple separation.

“In” the temple would then have meant Jesus having frequented the temple terrain, however, seemingly not only restricted to the assumed Court of Gentiles but He clearly states (once again

according to Luke's Gospel) that He sat down to teach - the manner in which a Jewish rabbi would have conveyed his teachings to his disciples – confidently and then in line with temple practices - and, at that stage, still consisting on the whole of Jews, not Gentiles, for Jesus had first-and-foremost come, according to the NT writers, for His own people, the Jews.

Jesus was then a true Jew who adhered to mainline Jewish traditions – although He had umpteenth clashes with the Pharisees and the Scribes (Sadducees) who clearly interpreted the Scriptures *also* to their own liking. Further, Luke's pinpointing in the *Acts of the Apostles* of more or less 120 souls having gathered in the Upper Room on Jesus' (Yeshua's) instruction, could perhaps be proof of this meticulous author having *on purpose* pointed out the exclusion of the (Essene) three thousand souls who had seemingly joined the apostolic ranks on Pentecost Day (Acts 2) yet only to, at a later stage, therefore after a certain timespan, have again severed ties with them.

Taking into account the schism that must by then have taken place, namely shortly after Paul and Peter's martyrdom, we should be able to understand the apostles' battle against apostasy (“untruths and lies”) something that would then indeed gradually have been falling in place, and we should then also be able, from such perspective, to understand the evolvement of this alternative “Messianic” (Christian) movement in a much better way, and that it had indeed by then existed, else we would not have been enlightened by the apostles of Jesus who left written material to us and so that we could, in hindsight, be able to put all the small pieces of the “transition” puzzle together, namely how the apostolic truth was conveyed to us and how deviations from it had caused the watering down of the first-century Church's practices and doctrine. Had this not been the case, St Ignatius would never have drawn a clear division between the first-century Church and its post-apostolic counterpart (early second century A.D).

Taking then note of the apostolic warnings against apostasies that were going to be imported by false teachers, we may gain a better understanding of why “truth” movements, even labelled as “sectarian”, have erupted over past centuries, urging the faithful to return to “the faith that was once delivered to the saints” (Jude v3). The apostolic New Testament letters indeed give us a clear picture of a sectarian group who had turned schismatic, and which move became even more distinct in the days of the Apostle John, that apostolic leader who lived to taste the reign of the cruel Domitian (round about 100 A.D).

It seems history indeed repeats itself and where the first-century Church, and especially since its inclusion of the Gentiles who have come to Christ, began with house churches, the very same pattern is now again erupting globally, the main incentive being of course to faithfully guard the first-century apostolic truth that was once brought to us by those anointed who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' testimony and teachings.

For this reason we urge all believers in Jesus and Gospel Truth to join the House Altar Movement, erecting an Altar of Faith (a *Bethel*, “House of God”) in their homes and so that the Lamp of faith in Jesus Christ as only Lord and Saviour will not be extinguished, especially in these days where apostasy and deviations from Biblical teachings and Christian moral conduct are again at stake.

In such a House Altar gathering, prayers and dedication to God and what we have received from the Apostles of Jesus as “Gospel Truth”, can be enacted. For the time of persecution is already on the horizon and only those who really care for the Body of Jesus generally, will know that it is indeed in the pipeline and only those who strengthen themselves in Jesus, our only sure reality and foundation, holding then on to the reality we find *in Him*, will be able to ride the tide in such troubled times.

It is therefore now the appropriate time to encourage and to instill faith for He who has kept many of His followers, preserving them when the waters rose high threatening to destroy them, will also keep those who rely on His guidance, help and protection to the very end.

We therefore invite all who have a love for Jesus and Gospel reality, to get in touch with us, even though we may differ on the finer detail of theological issues. There is nothing that the love of Jesus (spurring on true brotherly love) cannot overcome!

So join our “House Altar Outreach”, sharing your testimony on Jesus either in writing or on audio, especially focusing on building bridges and not separating believers in our precious Lord Jesus through petty argumentation on theological issues. Bring then what Jesus lays on your heart to share with your fellows in Christ.

Let's make a bold effort, joining hands in one accord, keeping the Gospel train in true Christian spirit on track, by instilling faith and love in wavering hearts, not spreading hatred and causing alienation among those who belong to Jesus! Besides, Jesus is coming again for a clean, faithful Bride who must brim with Holy Spirit works (fruits) of which “brotherly love” should be the most important quality among God's faithful.

Contact us via our Home page today!

Love you with the love of our precious one and only Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a ransom for our souls.

We cannot never neglect this great gospel we have received first-hand from those who have seen Jesus personally. Those who also have been witnesses of His resurrection. And of course meaning those who were filled with God's Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

Let's move on in one accord, extending with a warm heart and a kind and gentle spirit the precious love of Jesus among one another!

Let's forget all pettiness, believing that should we differ on the smaller detail of declaration of the Scriptures, we will do so in the love of Jesus who will, at His return, remove the cloud of misunderstanding in one go!

It is especially in small group gatherings where we can pray for the return of the Holy Spirit gifts and so that we will, once again, even on a small group level, be enabled to experience the Biblical reality of the operation thereof.

Besides, Holy Spirit can only operate *in reality* if vessels who have received this “Power from on High” live a holy (separated) life for Christ, our Saviour, for God's most precious gift (indeed the NT deposit of our faith), can only come to *first-century apostolic reality* should we guard against contaminating ourselves with the spirit of the world, also being fully prepared to cleanse ourselves *continually* both spiritually and morally before God who has given us sound prescriptions in the Bible (OT *and* NT) how to obey Him and so that He can equip us with the real (!) “Power from on High” (Acts 1.8). Guarding our walk before God is then essential for every believer just as praying on a daily basis, “Deliver us from evil”, also is.

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[www.housealtarnetwork.com](http://www.housealtarnetwork.com)

We do not build a church but we would love to be part of a network of prayer warriors and teachers

of Gospel Truth, believers who are dedicated to Jesus and His revealed Holy Spirit reality!