

Jesus heart's desire that Christians are one worldwide.

Part 3

NKJV (John 17: 20-23) 20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one; 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

In the previous article we talked about the origins of the first communities, the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas and how the first Christians experienced the faith in Christ and strengthened their love for each other.

In those exciting days the good news was spread and the Christian house communities spread like an oil slick over the civilized world:

NKJV (Romans 16: 5) 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.

NKJV (1 Corinthians 16:19) 19 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

NKJV (Colossians 4:15) 15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

NKJV (Philemon 1: 2) 2 to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

These house communities were the meeting places where education, knowledge, chants, prayer and meals were shared. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

Jesus said the following about meetings:

NKJV (Matthew 18:20) 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Sometimes there were special circumstances, such as speeches and healings by the apostles, or the celebration of the Lord's Supper, whereby the various house communities gathered together:

NKJV (Acts 5:12) 12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

NKJV (Acts 20: 7-8) 7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.

These were also meetings where the individual Christian house communities could speak to each other, encourage each other and where new disciples were presented to each other.

The book of Acts mainly describes the Christian (missionary) work of the apostles Peter and Paul and the building of the Christian communities.

It is generally assumed - by the remarkable use of words and described healings - that the physician Luke has written the gospel according to Luke and also the Acts of the apostles:

NKJV (Colossians 4:14) 14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

The theme of this article is the missionary work and the establishment of the house communities, the points of attention that there were and the run-up to the two witnesses prophecy.

As we already wrote in the previous article, some of the Pharisees, who had become believing Christians, stuck to the circumcision.

The following, the apostles wrote back to the churches in Antioch in Syria:

NKJV (Acts 15: 27-30) 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. 30 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

Distance occurs between Paul and Barnabas:

NKJV (Acts 15: 35-41) 35 Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. 36 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." 37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Paul was a go-getter with a driven personality who was determined to do the work that was entrusted to him.

Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus, which name means 'a son of encouragement'. (Acts 4:36)

Mark was not an apostle and comes into the picture for the first time during the arrest of Jesus (Mark 14: 51-52) as the interested young man whose garment was gripped, but who fled naked.

It was the house of Mark's mother, where Peter after his escape from prison fled to. (Acts 12:12)

Paul could absolutely not understand that he (Mark) had left Paul and Barnabas from Pamfilia (Antalya and Perge in present-day Turkey) on their first missionary journey.

They had to endure a lot during that first trip. In Acts 13: 5 it says, that Markus (John) came to Cyprus as an assistant. Markus, however, was not yet ready for the missionary work, could not handle all of this yet. But Paul did not want to experience that again. This, however, led to a disagreement, a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, so that they parted divided.

Barnabas then took Markus to Cyprus.

For the Christian communities, it was a shock that the unity was under pressure.

Later, Paul saw that Marcus had grown as a missionary and was he grateful for the work of Mark:

NKJV (2 Timothy 4:11) 11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

NKJV (Philemon 1:24) 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

The fraternal relationship with Barnabas was also restored according to the letter to the Galatians:

NKJV (Galatians 2: 1) 1 Then after fourteen years I (Paul) went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.

It is the same Mark who wrote 'the gospel according to Mark' (with especially Peter as source). Peter also called him 'his son'. (1 Peter 5:13)

- Paul's second missionary journey from Antioch in Syria



NKJV (Acts 16: 1-3) 1 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

Timothy had a Jewish mother and according to 'the law' had to be circumcised on the 8th day after his birth, but was not circumcised. Probably that his Greek father had a difficulty with that.

Timothy was given a good testimony and Paul had plans for him as a missionary.

Now a letter had been written - in response to the question about circumcision - by the apostles and elders from Jerusalem to the communities in Antioch (Acts 15:23, 27-30). The circumcision no longer applied to the Gentiles who had become Christians. However, it was Paul's plan that Timothy would go as a missionary to unbaptized Jews to preach, as Paul's direct fellow missionary. Paul immediately understood that he (as half-Jew) would not be accepted by the unbaptized Jews as a preacher, because being faithful to 'the law' was very sensitive to them. It was for that reason that he circumcised Timothy, giving them no reason to stumble.

Later Paul and Silas visit, together with Timothy, Phrygia and the land of Galatia. (see the map)

Then, Paul gets a vision in Troas (in the vicinity of Dalyan in present-day NW-Turkey):



NKJV (Acts 16: 9) 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Paul, Silas, and Timothy stay a few days in Philippi, in Macedonia (Acts 16:12):



Photo Wikipedia



NKJV (Acts 16: 14-19) 14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us,

saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us. 16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

There are sometimes persons within the Christian communities who believe that they have the gift of prophesying through the Holy Spirit, but what regrettably turns out to be fortune-telling:

NKJV (Ezekiel 13: 2, 6) 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the Lord!' "....6 They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the Lord!' But the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed.

NKJV (Deuteronomy 18:10) 10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer....

NKJV (Acts 16: 22-23, 25-26) 22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely....25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

The keeper of the prison thought the prisoners had escaped. He wanted to kill himself, but Paul spoke to him and he put faith in Jesus words and was baptized together with his family:

NKJV (Acts 16: 33-34) 33 And he (the keeper of the prison) took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship and the unjust stay in prison. (Verse 37)
The journey of Paul, Silas and Timothy continued, to the city of Thessalonica in Macedonia:

NKJV (Acts 17: 1-2) 1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

The Christian Jason had given shelter to Paul, Silas and Timothy by taking them in his home:

NKJV (Acts 17: 3-5) 3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. 5 But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming

envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Jason and some other brothers had to pay money as security for Paul and Silas. (Acts 17: 9) From Thessalonica, the missionary journey went on to Berea at the urging of the brothers.

NKJV (Acts 17: 10-11) 10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

All our articles are written with care, which does not detract from the fact that it is good to carefully examine - in imitation of the Bereans - whether the things described are really so. Everyone is free to place a 'comment' to the articles with everyone's questions, comments or thoughts.

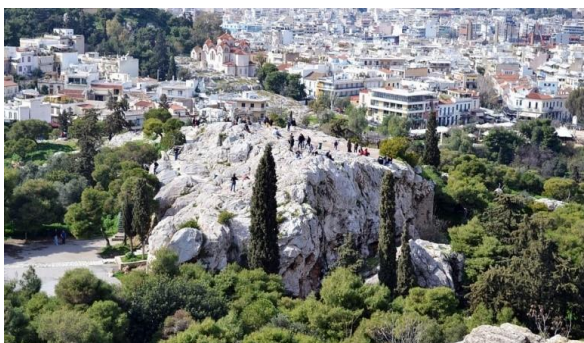
The Jews of Thessalonica came to confuse the inhabitants of Berea about Paul:

NKJV (Acts 17: 13-14) 13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. 14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.

From Berea, Paul went, at the urging of the brothers, alone by boat to Athens:

NKJV (Acts 17: 15-17) 15 So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed. 16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

Some of the inhabitants of Athens felt, that Paul was telling nonsense and brought him to the Areopagus, a rock plateau in the vicinity of the famous Parthenon (temple) on the Acropolis (table mountain):



Because the city was full of images of idols, Paul began to speak about an altar that he had seen that was dedicated to 'an unknown God'. Paul gladly wanted to tell them about the God (YHWH):

NKJV (Acts 17: 22-24) 22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

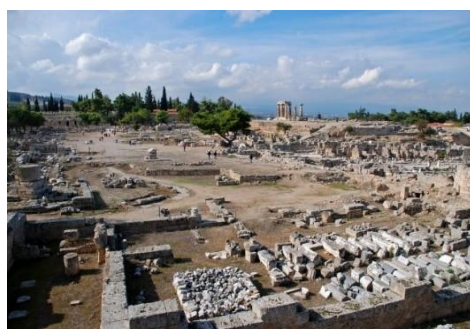
Some put faith in Paul's words, such as Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman whose name was Damaris (see verse 34). From Athens the journey continued to Corinth:

NKJV (Acts 18: 1) 1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.

Ancient Corinth was an important trading town in the Peloponnese region, built on terraces, on a strip of land with a trade route and close to a port. The city was situated between two seas, on one side the Ionian Sea via the Gulf of Corinth and on the other side the Aegean Sea. There were several temples in Corinth, such as at below right the Apollo temple.



Paul stayed there for 1.5 years (Acts 18:11) and worked as tentmaker (Acts 18: 3), just as Priscilla and Aquila - fellow workers in Christ (Romans 16: 3) - were also tent makers. It was an ideal location for the preaching work because of its location.



In the meanwhile, Silas and Timothy had arrived from the Macedonia region:

HerzSt (Acts 18: 5-8) 5 When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. 6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed

on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

From there, Paul left for Ephesus in the company of Priscilla and Aquila, who remained there. (Acts 18:19)

From Ephesus the journey continued to Caesarea and then to Jerusalem to greet and inform the apostles and the communities. And thereafter back to Antioch. (Acts 18:22)

Later on, Paul wrote several letters to the communities in Corinth, as hereinafter follow a few parts of **the first letter to the communities in Corinth**:

NKJV (1 Corinthians 1: 10-11) 10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

Paul emphasizes to be one, one of thought and one of feeling, not to strive for the high things, but to stay with humble things. (Romans 12:16)

In verse 12, Paul describes that it gives division to say; I am from Paul, I from Apollos, I from Cephas (Peter), and I from Christ. It was particular Christ who wanted unity (John 17: 20-21) and besides, the gospel of Christ does not divide, but makes the communities as one.

We must love one another, be compassionate and merciful and kind. (1 Peter 3: 8)

NKJV (Matthew 18: 7) 7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

NKJV (1 Corinthians 5: 1) 1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles--that a man has his father's wife!

Jesus said the following about the contents of one's heart:

NKJV (Matthew 15:19) 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

The apostles (and the Holy Spirit) had written the following recommendation:

NKJV (Acts 21:25) 25 But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

Paul continues going into this in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 + 6:

NKJV (1 Corinthians 5: 11-13) 11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person. 12 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."
ESV (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) 9Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor

idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Those who are still struggling with such thoughts are urgently requested to kill these thoughts. Those who perform them do not belong in a clean Christian house community:

***NKJV** (Colossians 3: 5) 5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

***NKJV** (Revelation 21: 8) 8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

And what nowadays has again become topical; deception of - and sexual acts with - minors, also called pedophilia. It is serious fornication. It is perverse and shameful behavior.

We unfortunately live in a devious and depraved generation. (Deuteronomy 32: 5) (2 Peter 2:12)

Pedophilia is now being discussed by some (unbelievers) as something natural and that goes further and further. Noteworthy is also the explosive increase of transgender children:

https://dailycaller.com/2019/01/22/record-number-uk-children-identify-transgender-poll-study/?utm_source=samizdat&utm_medium=partner&utm_campaign=free

Talk about this with your children, in which way some people deceive children through the internet and where (sometimes young) people are capable of, such as blackmail and ultimately abuse. Discuss with your children how some people try to mislead children with transgender behavior.

***NKJV** (1 Corinthians 6: 4) 4 If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? 5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!*

Remarkably Christian advice from Paul to allow a wise brother to judge between brothers, instead of those who are least esteemed by the community, non-Christian judges, to judge them.

There were also some persons, in the communities in Corinth, who with little respect participated to 'the Lord's Supper':

***NKJV** (1 Corinthians 11: 20-22) 20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. 21 For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.*

Paul is clear here, the Lord's Supper is no ordinary meal. Everyone uses his own meal prior to the celebration with - preferably - no wine, to be brightly present.

The using of the Lord's Supper must be done in deep respect and prayer.

Remember that baptized Christians are born again (John 3:3) on the basis of God's mercy:

NKJV (Titus 3: 4-5) 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

- Preparing now for the worldwide preaching work, the two witnesses prophecy

In Revelation is unequivocally written, that there is a strong angel with a small open book and calls that there will be delay no longer. (Rev. 10: 1-6) This angel has a face like the sun (Rev. 10: 1) just like Jesus in Rev. 1:16. It is obvious that this strong angel portrays Jesus, also because this angel roars like a lion. Jesus is the lion of Judah. (Rev. 5: 5)

When the seventh trumpet is blown, the holy secret is fulfilled. (Rev. 10: 7)
The 'holy secret' appears to be the Kingdom of God and the key role that Jesus fulfills in the reign of the New Jerusalem:

NKJV (Luke 8: 10) 10 And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'

That 'the holy secret' is fulfilled means, that the New Jerusalem is ready for residency in heaven for: God (YHWH), Jesus, the prophets, the apostles, the saints and the great crowd. Then it is announced that during the (great) tribulation there will be two witnesses of the Lord on earth. The two witnesses will work for 1260 days or 42 months (each of 30 days) clothed in sackcloth.

Clothed in sackcloth means, that their testimony carries a message where repentance fits. (Rev. 11: 2-3) The two witnesses will prophesy and do works in the power of Elijah and Moses.

(See also: 3. The two witnesses <http://www.dojc.nl/?p=3139&lang=en>)

NKJV (Luke 1:17) 17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

NKJV (Malachi 4: 6) 6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

Should we still organize ourselves in house communities?

Are we already prepared for a share in the 2 witnesses' prophecy?

Then start with the work that in our days - as a chosen people - will be fulfilled.

- **Finally:**

We have been instructed to approach all unbelievers during this worldwide preaching work, this is of great importance, it is the last chance and it is lifesaving.
Start with it so that the following words can be said:

HerzSt (Romans 10:18) 18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."

It is a privileged position to point out to all dear ones and unbelievers the eternal solution to a life in love as it is meant by our Creator.

This is only possible if we keep ourselves clean for the temptations and depravities of this world:

HerzSt (1 Peter 2:11-12) 11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

In the next article we will discuss the persecution, the humiliation in the house communities, the Christian behavior of women and what kind of distinction can be made in infidels.

P.S. On the site ['Disciples of Jesus Christ'](#) there are more substantive Christian articles.