

# THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE CHURCH

It has also been suggested that the Synagogue rather than the Temple served as the model for the church and this appears to be true. For example, the term "synagogue" means "to assemble;" while the term "church" means "the called out," a term used by the Greeks to indicate a gathering or an assembly of people ("Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words," Vine, W.E.).

The organizational format of the Synagogue and the worship pursued have much in common with the way the church functions. A unique feature of the Synagogue is that it was a laity movement. "The Synagogue was the creation of the laity and came from those progenitors of the Pharisees (the Hasidim), who were recruited not from the hereditary priesthood, or a wealthy aristocracy, but from the common people" ("The Bridge Between the Testaments," Booth, Henry K., p. 87). Synagogues were independent with no central governing body. They proliferated rapidly both in Palestine and among the Diaspora until at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD it was reported that there were 480 in the city of Jerusalem (perhaps exaggerated...another source reports more than 300 CM)) (Singer, Isadore (ed.), The Jewish Encyclopaedia, Vol. XI, p. 620).

According to Jewish practice, a Synagogue was to be founded in each city where there were ten heads of families. The organization was simple with Elders (Zegenim), a group of men selected by the people; a minister (Chazzan...Rabbi) who brought out and replaced the scrolls and taught the children; and the "Receivers of Alms" who collected the offering and were in charge of its distribution (not much different from our elders, deacons, and ministers).

"Worship in the Synagogue emphasized the reading of the Sacred Scriptures, instruction, exhortation, prayer and singing" ("Essentials of Bible History," Mould, Elmer W.K., p. 463). Singing in the Synagogue was always without instrumental accompaniment. Abrahams states it succinctly, "When the Temple fell, instrumental music (whatever it may have been) was banished from the Jewish ritual." ("The Jewish Mind," Abrahams, Gerald, p. 89). As in the Temple, women had no public role or office in the synagogue. In fact, they were forbidden to speak there ("The Synagogue and the Church," Bernard, J.L., p. 198), although under some circumstances they may have been permitted to speak to a group of women ("The Synagogue, Its History and Function," Levy, Isaac, p. 44).

Carl Mitchell