

## **The Influence of the Synagogue on the Organizational Structure of the New Testament Church**

Since the Hebrew Christians were not completely removed from Jerusalem until well into the second century, for the first hundred years, the Church remained very much a part of first-century Judaism, and its leaders stayed involved in many Jewish affairs. There was no immediate split from the synagogue, as evidenced by Jesus' warning that some synagogues would punish His followers for preaching a different brand of Judaism (Matt 10:17). The structure of the local synagogues was carried over directly into the structure of the early Church.

- 1. Nasi (president/ruler) - the principle leader of a synagogue. Three of these men would form a tribunal to judge cases concerning money, theft, immorality, admission of proselytes, laying on of hands, etc. James, the half-brother of Jesus', was the President of the Jerusalem Church (The churches of Asia Minor treated the Church in Jerusalem with much the same authority that the synagogues did the Sanhedrin.)**
- 2. Chazen (public minister/overseer) - prayed and preached behind a wooden pulpit. Titus was likely an overseer of the churches in Crete.**
- 3. Parnas (deacon/elder) - Scripture scholars who cared for the poor and distributed alms. Stephen is described as a deacon - Acts 6:1-6**
- 4. Shaliach (announcer/apostle) - one who is sent forth to proclaim God's plan of redemption --- this position is equivalent to that of our modern missionary or church planter. In this sense both Paul and Barnabas functioned as apostles.**
- 5. Maggid (a migratory evangelist) - spoke to various congregations.**
- 6. Batlanim (scholarly teacher) - the teaching pastor who provided the congregation with accurate academics and answers. Apollos of Acts 18 may have functioned as a Batlanim.**
- 7. Zakin (counselor) - elders of at least 50 years of age who provided counsel for the congregation.**
- 8. Rabbi (prophet) - a prophet in the manner of the post-exilic prophets who carried the responsibility of exhorting and edifying the people with the Word. Agabus of Acts 11 & 21 is a prophet.**
- 9. Precentor (song leader)**

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