

## Ethics and the Earliest Christian Community

Acts 2:22-24

### Introduction:

1. The Way of life (Matt. 7:13-14) is in the Kingdom of God and in the acceptance of His yoke (Deut. 6:4ff; Matt. 11:28-30). It involves a deliberate choice of God as our King (Matt. 16:16ff), and steadfast loyalty to Him in all circumstances. Such is the foundation of all biblical ethics and healthy behavior.
2. We have learned that biblical ethics finds its origin in God and so—we are called to be holy for He is holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16).
3. We have learned that the O.T. Jewish system (properly interpreted and applied) exemplifies this fact and that it is confirmed by the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.
4. In this lesson consideration will be given to Acts 2 and how these principles are fleshed out in the earliest Christian community.

Discussion: (Note how Peter's sermon is organized on the basis of what God has done (2:22-36) and then how men are to respond (2:37-47).

- I. Peter preaches the Kingdom and the coronation of the King (2:25-36).
  - A. The resurrection is the demonstration of God's power to bring about His kingdom in spite of the gates of Hades (i.e., the power of death) (Matt. 16:18-19).
    1. It has always been God's plan to deliver from death.
    2. He raised Jesus and along with that comes the promise to raise us (Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:1ff; 1 Cor. 15).
  - B. Peter interprets Psa. 16:8-11 and 2 Sam. 7:12ff as referring to the resurrection of Jesus and his taking His seat at the right hand of God (2:25-35) just as David had predicted in Psa. 110:1. Thus in these O.T. texts there is evidence of the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. Thus God has been at work throughout history.
  - C. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (2:36).
    1. The King has been raised from the dead.
    2. The King has been exalted to the right hand of God.
  - D. God is the force behind all history. He has acted to bring about the fulfillment of the old messianic hope. He is the one we are indebted to for establishing this great kingdom. Peter's hearers were impressed—deeply impressed and rightly they should have been, and we should be. Cf. Deut. 32:1-5 where Moses described God's work, His faithfulness, His justice and righteousness. But then described the people as a perverse and crooked generation. Like them, those on Pentecost had rejected God's plan by crucifying the one sent to them.
- II. Peter preaches acceptance of the King and His Kingdom and **separation** from "this crooked and perverse generation."

- A. Peter exhorts God's people to separate themselves from their rebellious compatriots.
- B. He said, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is for you and your children and to all those who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself" (2:38-39).
  - 1. God is "calling people to Himself."
  - 2. This necessarily involves calling them away from "this crooked and perverse generation."
    - a. Just as God had called Israel to Himself as he called them out of Egypt (Ex. 29:45).
    - b. Moses reiterated the same in Deut. 7:1-6. He said, "You are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."
    - c. God had called the people out of Babylon with similar language (Isa. 52:11).
    - d. Paul was repeating the same call in 2 Cor. 6:14-18. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:2, 9, 24, 26
  - 3. This call has moral and ethical implications—demands repentance, involves forgiveness and "walking in a manner worthy of the calling (Eph. 4:1-6:20).
- C. All those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ are saints by calling (1 Cor. 1:2).
- D. Baptism was the transition point of separation from the perverse generation and entrance into the kingdom of God.
  - 1. Like baptism into Moses was the transition point for Israel's separation from Egypt (1 Cor. 10:1ff).
  - 2. The people of Pentecost joined the Kingdom of God being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ in response to God calling them to Himself. And so, God added them to His group.

### III. About three thousand souls responded in faithful devotion.

- A. Previously in the Sermon on the Mount we observed three elements critical to the establishment and maintenance of the kingdom of God: Law (Matt. 5:17-48); Worship (Matt. 6:1-34); Relationships (Matt. 7:1-12).
- B. Notice the same three elements reiterated in Acts 2:42-47.
  - 1. "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching" – the Law. The community was under the guidance of the apostles.
  - 2. "To the breaking of bread and to prayer" – Worship. I take the breaking of bread here to be the Lord's Supper. It would seem superfluous to mention that they ate common meals in this context.
  - 3. "And all those who had believed were together . . . – Relationships.
- C. Note the ethical implications of their new relationship with their King.
  - 1. These are evidenced throughout the Book of Acts.
  - 2. And the Epistles add evidence the breadth and on-going execution of the same ethical principles.

### IV. So what does this mean?

- A. This defines who/what the church is; it defines who we are.
  - 1. It is the people of God, functioning as a people in the full exercise of all their communal activity.
  - 2. It is not an institutional or organizational entity that often characterizes “church” in the modern world. We do not need to think “denominational organization/hierarchy.”
  - 3. It is not just a worshipping community in some sacred edifice. While the church worships it is so much more. It involves a Way of life that encompasses every area of life. All activities are disciplined by the King. The ethical boundaries are described as the apostles’ teaching. Thus, the necessity of respecting the authoritative revelation in trust and obedience.
- B. We are the people who confess the King and make Him the Lord of our life (Matt. 16:16ff; 1 Tim. 6:13ff; Matt. 27:11).
- C. We are the people who trust (have faith in) the King’s judgments. And thus, we are trying to learn what is pleasing to Him (Eph. 5:10). We submit to His authority in recognition not only that He knows better than we do, but that He has our best interest at heart. After all He sacrificed His son for us, “How will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:31ff). He is definitely “for us” (Rom. 8:31)!
- D. This defines our work (1 Pet. 2:9-10). And so, we “proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light.”
- E. We are His special people separated from the world and joined together with Him.

#### Conclusion:

- 1. If you are a part of “this crooked and perverse generation” hear the call.
- 2. God is calling you to Himself.
- 3. Will you repent, place your trust in Him, and be baptized calling on the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?
- 4. Will you then walk in a manner worthy of this calling? Will you devote yourself to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship in the breaking of bread and prayer? In your relationships will you serve and in awe proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you into His marvelous light?