

The Church In Acts (1)

Acts 1:2b-8

Introduction:

1. In any consideration of what the Bible says about the church the N.T. book of Acts provides an important bridge between the gospels and the epistles.
2. As the gospels look forward to the developing community and the epistles describe the community already in existence, Acts describes the community in its infancy.
3. In our next three lessons consideration will be given to the emergence of the church, its mission and its organization.
4. In this lesson we will focus on the emergence of the church.

Discussion:

I. The passage that we have just read (Acts 1:2b-8) might be described as a “birth announcement.

- A. After Jesus’ resurrection and before His ascension He spoke to the disciples concerning the kingdom. He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem for what the Father had promised, specifically, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
1. The Father had promised through the prophets a time when men would recognize God as King (Isa. 2:2-4, 11, 19). Cf. 1 Sam. 8:7.
 - a. It is for all nations (2-3).
 - b. It involves submission to His ways and walking in His paths (3). The word of the Lord is the Law in this kingdom (3).
 - c. It is a kingdom of peace (4).
 - d. The Lord alone will be exalted (11c, 17).
 - e. Men will be humbled before the splendor of His majesty (19).
 2. Daniel had predicted the coming of this kingdom (2:36-45). Cf. 2 Sam 7:12-13.
 - a. His predictions came during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon.
 - b. Note that Daniel says, “the God of heaven has given Nebuchadnezzar the kingdom.” The God of heaven is in control. Nebuchadnezzar is merely a vassal under the control of God, the King.
 - c. God’s kingdom is so powerful it will never be destroyed (44-45).
 3. Joel specifically referenced the pouring out of God’s spirit on all mankind (2:28-32a). Peter references this passage specifically in Acts 2:17-21.
 4. Both John and Jesus had preached “the kingdom at hand.”
 5. Now Jesus’ announcement is to wait in Jerusalem. “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5).
- B. The apostle’ anticipation is intense (1:6).
1. “Is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”
 2. “The Father has fixed the time by His own authority.”
 3. “Wait and you will receive power.”

II. The critical event in the launching of the Christian community occurred on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

- A. Not until the descent of the Spirit was the community activated (Acts. 2:1ff). A group of about 120 is seen in 1:15ff anticipating the coming of the Spirit.
 - 1. Jews from various nations were assembled (5-13).
 - 2. Peter, to whom the keys of the kingdom had been given, opened the door of knowledge and revealed entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 16:19; Lk. 11:52; Acts 2:14-36).
 - 3. He preached Jesus exalted to the right hand of God, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:32-36).
- B. With the coming of the Spirit the community is enlarged in an astonishing manner on the grounds of belief, repentance and baptism (2:38, 41).
- C. Growth continued after the day of Pentecost (2:47, 4:4).
- D. This early community saw no need to break its Jewish connections but continued "in the temple" (2:46). Their message was the fulfillment of Jewish expectation. They were the "true Israel."

III. The shift from an exclusively Jewish community to a mixed Jewish-Gentile community did not come without some difficulty.

- A. Peter was convinced by a vision that God wanted Gentiles included (Acts 10).
- B. The shift was gradual from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, to eunuchs, and only then to Gentiles.
- C. The development of a universal church is a direct fulfillment of what Jesus had commanded (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8).

IV. Their spontaneous patterns of behavior reflected the type of community they were (Acts 2:42-47).

- A. The patterns that developed included . . .
 - 1. Devotion to the apostles' teaching. This was reflective of the authority of heaven (Matt. 16:17), the law going forth from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3); the apostles being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) and with Jesus' commission that they should teach "all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20).
 - 2. Devotion to the breaking of bread and to prayer (2:42).
 - a. This breaking of bread in all probability refers to the Lord's Supper that they are perpetuating in the community just as the Lord had said, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Lk. 22:19).
 - b. There can be no doubt that the earliest Christians saw at once a need to observe it.
 - c. Acts gives no indication of how it was observed. 20:7 indicates that the church at Troas observed it on the first day of the week.
 - d. The evidence is clear that praying together was highly valued by these early Christians (1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24; 6:6; 12:12; 13:1).
 - 3. Common worship was a pattern (2:46, 47). Day by day they continued with one mind in the temple. They were praising God.
 - 4. They were together (2:44) with one mind (46), taking their meals together with

gladness and sincerity of heart (46).

- B. Among the patterns of behavior was . . .
1. Concern for those in need (Acts 2:44; 4:32). A common fund was established from which those in need were supplied. Some sold property and possessions to contribute to the fund, but the act seems to have been voluntary (note 5:4). It does not appear to be obligatory, but natural. They were concerned for widows (6:1).
 2. Such concern transcended congregational boundaries as evidenced by the church at Antioch and their sending of help to the needy at Jerusalem (Acts 11:27). A similar action seems to be involved in Paul's collection scheme of 1 Cor. 16:1ff.
- C. Note that these patterns were not regarded as some legalistic code imposed from without, but were the natural outgrowth of who these people were. Such patterns of behavior reflected their humble submission to their King. They did not contribute to the needy, pray together, observe the Lord's Supper, etc. because they had to in order to avoid going to Hell. They did these things as a natural result of who they had become—citizens in the kingdom of God. Just as their King was involved in such behaviors they were too.

Conclusion:

1. In the next lesson we will consider their work of communicating the kingdom to the lost as their mission. This too was a part of the pattern of their behavior. They went everywhere preaching the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ as the new king.
2. Have you accepted Him as your king? Have you made Him the Lord of your life? Or are you the one who is on the throne?
3. Would you do what those 3,000 did on the day of Pentecost? Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins!