

## The Church In Acts (2)

### Introduction:

1. In this study we will address “The Mission of the Church” as it is communicated through the Book of Acts.
2. The mission of the church as stated in the great commission was to . . .
  - a. “Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20).
  - b. “Preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” (Mk. 16:15-16).
  - c. Proclaim repentance for forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Luke records Jesus as saying to the disciples, “You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk. 24:45-49).
3. The mission is reiterated in Acts 1:8 as Jesus speaks to the disciples. “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”
4. Their mission was to witness, make disciples baptizing and teaching them, preaching the gospel, proclaiming repentance for forgiveness of sins.
5. Our purpose in this lesson is to discover the nature of this witness. The speeches in Acts provide the material for discovering what their witness was.
  - a. There are 5 speeches given by Peter.
    - 1) Acts 2:14ff – The Pentecost Sermon.
    - 2) Acts 3:11ff – Sermon on Solomon’s Portico.
    - 3) Acts 4:5ff – Sermon to the Rulers and Elders.
    - 4) Acts 5:29ff – Sermon to the Council.
    - 5) Acts 10:34ff – Sermon to Cornelius’ House.
  - b. One given by Stephen (Acts 7).
  - c. There are 5 speeches given by Paul.
    - 1) Acts 17:22ff – Sermon In the Areopagus.
    - 2) Acts 22:1ff – Sermon to the Jews.
    - 3) Acts 23:1ff – Before the Council.
    - 4) Acts 24:10ff – Before Felix.
    - 5) Acts 26:4ff – Before Agrippa.

### Discussion:

- I. They believed that the age of the newly formed community was the age of the fulfillment of prophecy (cf. 2:16, 25-35; 3:18-26).
  - A. This accounts for their appeal to O.T. testimonies. Cf. LK. 24:45.
  - B. The early Christians understood a continuity between their message and the O.T. predictions of the coming age (e.g. Acts 7:1ff; 24:14-16).

II. The core of the message was the death and resurrection of Jesus.

A. It is mentioned in all of Peter's speeches.

1. He is descended from David (Acts 2:29-30).
2. He lived and performed signs among the people (Acts 2:22).
3. He died and was raised as part of God's plan (Acts 2:23).
4. Although men were responsible for His death, God raised Him up and exalted Him (2:33-36; 3:15). He was God's servant (3:13); the rejected stone (4:11); Prince and Savior (5:31).

B. Paul splits the Jewish council (composed of Pharisees and Sadducees) by saying, "I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6).

III. The witnesses were bound together in the conviction that the Holy Spirit was witnessing through them (2:33; 5:32). The presence and the power of the Holy Spirit was a facet of their mission (2:4, 17).

IV. The aim of the proclamation is seen in the exhortation for people to repent and believe and therefore receive salvation (2:38, 39; 3:19, 25-26; 4:12, 5:31; 10:43).

A. The basis of the new community was the work of Christ (cf. 1:1; 2:33; 3:6; 4:10) and so actions were taken "in the name of Christ."

B. The qualification for membership was repentance and faith.

C. The community consisted of those who sought a new relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

V. There were no specific appeals made in the speeches of Peter, Paul (or Stephen) for hearers to join the community. However, they did exhort a person to be baptized, which implies incorporation into the new relationship and into the Christian body.

A. Those who believed were baptized (2:38, 41; 8:12, 36; 16:15, 33; 19:5; 22:16) as a part of their initiation into the new relationship and into the community. This maintains continuity with the great commission as given by Matthew and Mark (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16).

B. Baptism was carried out "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38) compare "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). This implies that Luke gives no great importance to a precise formula. Luke sees no contradiction between baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but equivalence.

C. There are instances of household baptisms described in Acts 16:15, 33.

1. Some have said that infants were baptized on the basis of the faith of the head of the household.
2. However, in all other cases it is the individual's own faith which is linked with baptism.
3. Therefore it is impossible to conclude that baptism is for those who do not themselves exercise faith. Scripture says nothing of infant baptism.

Conclusion:

1. The mission of the church is clear both from the great commission and from the evidences in Acts.
2. There is no evidence that the early disciples viewed their mission, as do some religious organizations today that focus on social, recreational, political missions.
3. Their interest was to bring people to belief in Jesus Christ and then to teach them what Christ had commanded.