

20-21 Bible Study #5

10/13/20

20-21 Acts and Paul

Review of Last Week

- Last week, we set the stage for the Book of Acts
- The calling of the 12 Apostles
- The documents that made up the Kerygma (teaching of the Apostles)
 - The Apostles Creed
 - The Didache
 - Eucharistic celebrations
 - Baptismal liturgies

Review of Last Week (Cont)

- Looked at the Ascension
 - Luke 24 and Acts 1
- Looked at the author and composition of Acts
- Examined Acts 1:1-9
 - Concept of Jesus coming on a cloud and its relationship to Daniel 7 and the Book of Revelations

Setting the Stage for Acts

- You are:
- a 25-year-old 1st Century Jew living in *Alexandria, Egypt* named *Jacob*
 - married with a family
 - working as a shopkeeper in *Alexandria*
 - visiting *Jerusalem* in 33 A.D. with your family and your best friend (*Abraham*) and his family, for the **Feast of Pentecost**
 - You have heard of, and are curious about, the “New Way” of Judaism

Acts 1 (Cont)

- **Acts 1:11** *“and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand around looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven*
 - The angels told the disciples to go to work by returning to Jerusalem and preaching the gospel
 - This ascension of Jesus took place from the top of the *Mount of Olives* located to the East of Jerusalem
 - This is why the early church faced east when in prayer
 - This was to fulfill the imagery that was discussed in the **Book of Ezekiel** where the Glory Cloud was to return from the East and
 - the direction from which they anticipated Jesus would return

Acts 1 (Cont)

- **Acts 1:12-14** *“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount of Olives,...and with his brethren”*
 - They gathered in the “upper room”
 - Luke also provided a list of the Apostles with Peter at the top indicating the hierarchical order
 - His brethren here may be referring to sons of Joseph from a former marriage or cousins of the Lord

Acts 1 (Cont)

- **Acts 1:15-22** *“In those days Peter stood up among the brethren,...became a witness to his resurrection”*
 - Here, the word “brethren” means a group of Christians
 - There were 120 (12X10)
 - Tens, hundreds, and thousands are used in the Bible to emphasize multiplicity
 - We have gone from 12 tribes to 120 followers
 - We also find a reference to the Blessed Mother and most likely Mary Magdalene and the women followers of the Lord

Acts 1 (Cont)

- Both **Luke** and **John** emphasized the role of women
- Further, the **Psalms** were seen by **Luke** as being inspired
- Again, it was the *Pharisees* (but not the *Sadducees*) who believed that the **Psalms** were inspired texts
- We see this *Parasitical* influence in the early Church in **2nd Timothy 3:16** where Paul states that all scriptures were inspired
- The word office here is *Episcope* meaning “overseer” leading to our English word for bishop

Acts 1 (Cont)

- **Acts 1:23-26** “*And they put forth two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias... and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles*”
 - The apostles prayed for guidance in selecting someone to replace *Judas* among the 12
 - So they cast lots which fell to *Matthias*
 - Casting lots was a practice from the Old Testament
 - When someone casts lots or flips a coin, God decides which side it lands on
 - Today, the *Coptic* Church still chooses it’s patriarch this way

Acts 1 (Cont)

- Father said that when the *Patriarch of Alexandria* died, they selected his successor by placing a number of names into a basket and had a small boy pull a name out of the basket
- They understood that to be the hand of God

Acts 2

Acts 2

- **Acts 2:1-2** *“When the day of Pentecost had come they are altogether in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and filled all the house where they were sitting”*
 - **Passover** celebrated the release from Egypt
 - **Pentecost** celebrated the receipt of the Law by *Moses* from God on Mount Sinai (even though they did not follow it)
 - **Booths** (Tabernacles) celebrated God coming to dwell among His people during their 40 year journey in the wilderness
 - These three feasts are listed in **Exodus 23** and **Deuteronomy 16**

Acts 2 (Cont)

- At that time, (after Moses was presumed dead), the people reverted to the worship of the golden calf (an Egyptian god) resulting in the killing of 3000 people at the hands of the Levites
- Here, we find the apostles in the upper room at the top of a mountain where they experience a similar experience of smoke and fire of the Holy Spirit
- Father asked what was going on here
- Many believe that this was the moment the Apostles received the Holy Spirit

Acts 2 (Cont)

- But, that was not the case here as they had already experienced the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on the Apostles and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (**John 20:22**)
- In this verse, the Holy Spirit is doing something more with the Apostles
 - Before Jesus ascended to the Father, He told them that he would be with them always when they consumed the Eucharist
 - This happens because of the power of the Holy Spirit

Acts 2 (Cont)

- **Acts 2:4-13** *“And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven....They are filled with new wine”*
 - Unfortunately, there is great confusion over the meaning of this passage
 - “Tongues” is an Old English word for “language”
 - “Language” comes from *lingua* the Latin word for tongue or language

Acts 2

- Today, when we hear the word “tongue,” we think of the muscle in our mouths
- Rarely do we hear anyone ask how many “tongues” do you speak
- This confusion began during the 1920s Azusa Street Revival which led to the modern *Pentecostal* movement (where people began to speak in tongues while others interpreted what they were saying)
- The gift of tongues should be seen as the gift of languages
- It is the ability to speak and have people understand you when you don't normally speak their language

Acts 2 (Cont)

- The word of God is no longer restricted to stone tablets as under the new covenant the word descends upon the tablets of man's heart (into his flesh)
- Father said that this is what the new *Pentecost* is all about as presented in **Jeremiah 31:31** *If I give you a new covenant O Israel, not like the one I gave you on Sinai that you broke. This new covenant that I will give you I will write my law, my words in your flesh."*

Acts 2 (Cont)

- The point of this *Pentecost* is that the word of God now comes through the power of the Holy Spirit to dwell among his people in their hearts and flesh
- We can see that Jesus is dwelling in their hearts by the power of the Spirit because when they open their mouths that is what came out
- Jesus also had said that what is in your heart comes out of your mouth (**Matthew 15**)
- So what happened here is that they opened their mouths and the word of God came forth as they spoke

Acts 2 (Cont)

- Many say that the gift of tongues was lost for 2000 years until it was rediscovered in the 1920s
- Father suggested that this was not the case and that this gift has been found among missionaries around the world for many years
- He said that he had heard many stories of missionaries speaking in English to indigenous people about the Faith and they miraculously understood what they were saying
- In this passage, the listeners (from Egypt, Libya, and as far away as Rome) heard the apostles speaking to them their respective language

Acts 2 (Cont)

- These were Jewish pilgrims (Some were proselytes) from the diaspora (not Gentiles) who were attending the Pentecost festival
- This was in compliance with **Exodus 23** and **Deuteronomy 16**
- They were all hearing about the mighty works of God (the Good News) in their own language
- In their amazement, they asked what this could possibly mean

Acts 2 (Cont)

- **Acts 2:14-18** *“But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, ‘men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words...and they shall prophesy’”*
 - Peter reassured the crowd that he and the apostles were not drunk as it was only 9 o’clock in the morning
 - This was in fulfillment of what the *Prophet Joel* had prophesied, that in the latter days the spirit would descend upon everyone (**Joel 2:28-32**)
 - Father pointed out that some see this passage as being “so beautiful”
 - But, in reality, the prophesy of *Joel* was about the coming destruction of Jerusalem

Acts 2 (Cont)

- His entire prophecy was about God's chastisement upon His people
- He indicated that in the midst of all of this the Spirit would descend and turn some of the people into prophets who could prophesy about the coming events
- Thus, in this section of Acts, Peter was saying that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled, implying that the destruction of Jerusalem was coming!
- We know that Jesus had previously preached about the coming destruction of the temple
- Unfortunately, the people of Jerusalem did not believe this

Acts 2 (Cont)

- Earlier Jesus told his disciples about the coming destruction and now, in **Acts**, Peter is talking about it again
- The message was that the destruction of the temple was coming and when the gift of the Holy Spirit would arrive so that all would know and understand what was about to happen
- In the Old Testament, the “spirit” descended upon a prophet or anointed a king, and here God’s people are suddenly being anointed kings and prophets

Acts 2 (Cont)

- **Acts 2:19-21** *“And I will show wonder in the heavens above and signs on the earth beneath, ... And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”*
 - Again, this is the same language that Jesus used concerning the coming destruction of Jerusalem
 - Those who call on the name of the LORD shall be saved
 - Father pointed out that the word LORD in **Joel** was in all caps meaning he was using the holy name *Yahweh*
 - It was originally written in Hebrew, *“Yahweh saves”*
 - Thus, those who called upon the name *Yahweh* would be saved

Acts 2 (Cont)

- **Acts 2:22-24** *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth,...you crucified and killed at the hands of lawless men...for him to be held by it”*
 - Men of Israel hear these words, “Yahweh saves”
 - Joshua means, “Yahweh is salvation”
 - Today, some popular theologians interpret this passage to mean, “God killed Jesus to have mercy on you and to make you good so that he would not have to kill you”
 - Father pointed out that this is a Lutheran concept and totally incorrect

Acts 2 (Cont)

- What Peter was saying to the Jews was that “you killed Jesus whom God had sent to you”
- God was not caught by surprise here
- They (the Jews) crucified Jesus by the hand of a lawless Gentile (Pilate)
- It seems that Peter never misses an opportunity to jab the Jews about their role in this matter
- But, God raised Him from the dead

Acts 2 (Cont)

- Father said that this passage contained two characters: the Jews who killed Jesus and God who raised Him from the dead (this is the furthest we can get from the Lutheran idea)
- Many Protestant theologians state that death is the punishment for sin therefore everyone deserves death
- But, that would not work out or there would be no one left to save
- So, He decided to kill His son (who was immortal), and then raise Him from the dead so He could be happy and save you!

Acts 2 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that this is nonsense and perhaps even a heresy
- God sent Jesus to save us and to teach us the way to God
- What actually happened was that they (the Jews) killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead
- God, as a part of His foreknowledge knew this was going to happen, but He did not order it to happen
- Death is not a punishment for sin; it is the result of sin
- Sin is not breaking the rules, it is breaking a loving relationship (more of this in the letters of Paul)
- Next, we will see Peter quoting from the **Psalms** again
- Luke and Paul were fascinated with how Jesus fulfilled the **Psalms**

Acts 2 (Cont)

- **Acts 2:25-36** *“For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me...he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption...this Jesus whom you crucified”*
 - This is a quote from **Psalm 16:8-11**
 - *Peter* was saying that this was not about *David* but Jesus
 - This did not mean that the **Psalms** were not first fulfilled by *David*, but it was a Semitic way of speaking
 - It meant that Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of this as the **Psalm** was about the resurrection of the Christ
 - We see this again in the next verse

Acts 2 (Cont)

- **Acts 2:37-39** *“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?...every one whom the Lord our God calls to him”*
 - When these Jews heard the truth of the gospel about the death and resurrection of Jesus, they were cut to the heart
 - They ask what can they do
 - Peter responded that it was simple, they should repent, change their ways, turn back to God and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins
 - If they were baptized, their sins would be forgiven and they could be one with Him as they received the Holy Spirit
 - It will take a bit of unpacking for us to fully understand what Peter was saying to them

Acts 2 (Cont)

- In the early church, when one came out of the water of baptism, they were immediately confirmed by the laying on of hands
- Unfortunately, today many see the sacrament of Confirmation as an event similar to a *Bar Mitzvah* that happens during one's teenage years
- Father pointed out that for centuries Baptism and *Chrismation* (Confirmation) occurred at the same time
- It was not until the 1920s that anyone received Communion (after Baptism) not having received Confirmation

Acts 2 (Cont)

- *St. Cyprian* spoke of the double sacrament: Baptism and Confirmation was needed before you were a member of the church and eligible for Communion
- Peter told the Jews on that Pentecost to repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit (Confirmation)
- Baptism was for the forgiveness of sins, and the receipt of the Holy Spirit were done together (even though they were seen as two separate stages to the process of initiation)