

20-21 Bible Study #6

10/20/20

20-21 Acts and Paul

Review of Last Week

- Last week, we began our study of Acts with a look at Luke's expanded discussion of the ascension of Jesus from the top of the Mount of Olives with images from the Book of Ezekiel
- This was followed by the eleven meeting in the upper room with some 120 disciples
- They then selected a replacement for Judas by casting lots
- Luke pointed out that this was at the time of the Feast of Pentecost with the city of Jerusalem filled with Jewish pilgrims from the diaspora
- Father pointed out that this was not the first time the Apostles received the Holy Spirit as Jesus had breathed the Holy Spirit on them before His ascension
- Here, we witness the miracle of speaking in tongues (meaning languages) causing their message to be understood in the languages of all those in the audience
- This was the new Pentecost promised in Jeremiah where a new covenant would be written on their hearts

Review of Last Week (Cont)

- Peter, in fulfillment of the prophet Joel proclaimed the spirit would descend upon everyone in the time of the great day of the Lord
- He also foresaw the great destruction of the temple that had been proclaimed by Jesus
- He pointed out how the Jewish leaders had killed Jesus (who was sent by God) at the hands of the pagan romans
- We ended by reassuring his audience (who asked what they could do to be saved) by calling on them to repent and be baptized

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 2 (Cont)

- **Acts 2:40-42** *“And he testified with many other words and exhorted them,...to the breaking of the bread”*
 - It is noteworthy that 3000 were baptized into Jesus on this day since 3000 were killed at the hands of the Levitical priests at the first Pentecost after the golden calf incident
 - These newly Baptized, we are told, devoted themselves to the teachings of the Apostles, fellowship in the breaking of the bread, prayer, and with the Gospel as taught by the Apostles

Acts 2 (Cont)

- This idea of “fellowship” meant that they worshipped together as one
- This clearly signals that the apostolic teachings, prayer, breaking of bread, and fellowship were Christian activities
- Father differentiated as to how some language concerning the breaking of the bread was part of a family meal, and at other times it was referring to the Eucharist
- But, within this text, it was pointing to the Eucharistic celebration

Acts 2 (Cont)

- This is further confirmed by its reference in the Pauline Epistles, the Gospel of **Luke**, and **Acts**
- Father said that there was no debate about this, but today, among some Christian groups, there is all sorts of confusion concerning the breaking of the bread
- *Ulrich Zwingli*, an Anabaptist whom influenced Protestantism, suggested that the idea of “communion” is something that one does occasionally or at least once a year
- But, as Father reiterated, frequent communion (Eucharist) was and is a regular Christian activity
- Both scriptures and the Fathers of the Church have continually stressed that the Eucharist was something that Christians did when they gathered together

Acts 2 (Cont)

- **Acts 2:43-47** *“And fear came upon every soul; ...and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need...who were being saved”*
 - This passage looks like it is proposing a tenant of “communism”
 - Father said this is so, but it is not the “atheistic communism” of modern- day Russia or China
 - It simply meant that the early church chose to live in a community and share all that they possessed with each other
 - Many sold their homes and properties and lived in common
 - This was done by the early church in Jerusalem and Judea
 - Looking back over Christian history, we do not see this happening very often
 - Nor, do we see it in the rest of the early Apostolic church

Acts 2 (Cont)

- In fact, the rest of the Church (*Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus*) took up monetary collections on a regular basis to assist the people of the Church in Jerusalem
- Father pointed out that this experiment in communism did not work out very well
- He suggested that this decision of the *Jerusalem* Church may have been based on their understanding of Jesus' teaching during His passion (in which He prophesied that *Jerusalem* would be destroyed within one generation)
- We know (according to *Eusebius*), that all of the Christians left *Jerusalem* and fled to the town of ***Pella***, before the Roman siege of *Jerusalem*
- The last thing they would have wanted to deal with was the selling of their homes before they fled the Roman siege

Acts 3

Acts 3

- **Acts 3:1-10** *“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour...and amazed at what happened to him”*
 - The 9th hour is 3 PM
 - The Jews kept the hours of prayer at every 3 hours (3 is the number for completion) to be recited 5 times a day (6 AM sunrise, 9 AM, 12 noon, 3 PM, 6 PM sunset)
 - The Muslim practice came from this Jewish practice
 - Muhammad said that he learned how to pray from the Christians of Syria
 - Christian monasteries continue this practice and some have added compline
 - The Liturgy of the Hours is based around this practice
 - In this passage, we again see the primacy role of Peter as the leader of the 12 Apostles
 - He called for the selection of a replacement for Judas
 - He directed they be baptized
 - He along with John goes to pray in the temple

Acts 3 (Cont)

- From this, we see that the early Christians continued the Jewish practices in worship both in the Synagogue and Temple
- They saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jewish Law
- Father said that it is very important for us to understand this in order to appreciate what was going on in the Pauline Epistles (as the early Christians were still practicing all of these very Jewish practices)
- This eventually led to the major problem known as the Judaizers heresy
- This centered around the question of “Did one have to become a practicing Jew to become a Christian?”
- This was resolved by the *Council of Jerusalem* in 49 or 50 AD (**Acts 15**)
- At that time, a paralyzed man was required by the Law to remain outside of the Temple
- Here, he was rewarded and healed by Peter and John’s use of the “name of Jesus”
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Acts 3 (Cont)

- **Acts 3:11-16** *“While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s, astounded...has given this man perfect health in the presence of you all”*
 - Father reminded us that this passage lists Peter and John and it does not say that God killed Jesus
 - Instead, it says, “whom you delivered up,” then Peter administered a second jab by stating that Pilate had decided to release Jesus
 - They, on the other hand, asked for a murderer to be released
 - Finally, Peter reminds them that they witnessed the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

Acts 3 (Cont)

- **Acts 3:17-21** *“And now brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled...of his holy prophets from of old”*
 - As discussed earlier, this was all part of God’s plan
 - God knew that the Jews were going to reject His son even though it was not part of His plan
 - Also, He intended to raise Jesus from the dead
 - But, Father emphasized, this was not God’s purpose in sending Jesus to them
 - He was not sending His son to die, but to preach the word of God to the people and to be the presence of God among his people (Tabernacle)

Acts 3 (Cont)

- **Acts 3:22-26** *“Moses said, the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up...to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness”*
 - Luke is taking us all the way back to Moses
 - The first time this was referenced it referred to *Joshua* (**Deuteronomy 18:15**)
 - Here, it was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus who was the new *Joshua*
 - Jesus focused on the promise, *“so in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed”*
 - This was the third promise from God to *Abraham*
 - Through the seed of *Abraham*, all the nations will be blessed
 - This was accomplished by Jesus

Acts 4

Acts 4

- **Acts 4:1-7** *“And as they were speaking to the people, the priest and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them annoyed because they were teaching the people in proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead...by what name did you do this?”*
 - The *Sadducees* were not annoyed at Peter and John for speaking about Jesus, but for talking about His “resurrection from the dead”
 - As we remember, they (unlike the *Pharisees*) did not believe in anything after death
 - They believed that this nonsense was invented by the *Pharisees* and in this instance Peter and John were attempting to convince the people that the *Pharisees* were right
 - So, they sent the temple guards (under their control) to arrest them

Acts 4 (Cont)

- This arrest sounded like a massive tragedy for the early Church, but then suddenly, 5000 joined the church (12, 120, 3000, 5000)
- The church kept on growing
- As we have seen over the centuries, the church is watered (grows stronger) through the blood of the martyrs
- This pattern throughout history has always served as a great consolation to those being persecuted
- Father pointed out that we are facing this same situation today around the world
- We must remember that even if we should die, we will (with Jesus) rise from the dead

Acts 4 (Cont)

- **Acts 4:8-18** *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them,...and to all the people of Israel, but by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well...all in the name of Jesus”*
 - Father reminded us that Jesus had promised that when a disciple was questioned by the authorities, the Holy Spirit would provide the answers (**Luke 12:8-12**)
 - Again, Peter does not mess around with his answer to the *Sanhedrin*, causing them to wonder how these common fishermen could be so bold
 - So, they ordered Peter and John to no longer speak about this man anymore!

Acts 4 (Cont)

- **Acts 4:19-31** *“But Peter and John answered them, whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard... the word of God with boldness”*
 - They asked the *Sanhedrin* whether they should listen to God or to them concerning preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - Eventually, the *Sanhedrin* had to release them
 - Peter and John immediately returned to the gathered members of the church in *Jerusalem* and praised God for their having been called to suffer for the Faith
 - Again, Peter quotes from one of the Old Testament **Psalms (Psalm 2:1-2)**

Acts 4 (Cont)

- **Acts 4:32-37** *“Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common... and laid it at the apostles’ feet”*
 - This was taking place in Jerusalem where Peter gave testimony to the resurrection of Jesus
 - We even hear about *Barnabas* who will play a major role in the near future
 - Some ask: What is the Apostolic teaching and witnessing concerning the resurrection of Jesus?
 - Here, it points out the fact that God sent His son to save us
 - It also shows us what we are to be or how we could have been
 - But, they killed Jesus and He rose from the dead to show us what this new Adam can be in our future
 - The story continues in **Acts 5**