

The Church

History and Origin 3

1 In our discussion of the history and origin of the Church in this series of lessons, last week we looked at the events that brought the Apostles to Jerusalem, there to wait for the promise that God had given them of a helper that would teach them all things and remind them of all that Christ had taught them...

John 14:26

2

26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

We looked at the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostle, in Acts 2. We saw how that the Apostles, having been given all knowledge of the Church, able to lead it through its early days. We looked at the first recorded sermon in the Church, given by Peter, and how that the power of the Spirit gave them the ability to perform signs and wonders in their confirmation of the truth of the Gospel. The power of the Spirit enabled them to speak in other languages, at least fifteen foreign nations are mentioned and note what is said...

Acts 2:5-6

3

5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. **6** And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.

It is hard to imagine the scenes of that event. In a time when the bulk of the people were not what could be called educated, these 12 men standing before them speaking languages they should not have be able to. Do you think that maybe this might have gotten the attention of all those that were there? It would have me.

We looked at how Peter used the prophecies of old; Joel and David. He pointed out the prophecy that told of the things that had happened all around them; the sun turning dark and the moon into blood, like what is seen during a solar eclipse, when the moon passes between the Earth and the sun, prophecies, and visions. They had seen these things occurring at the sacrifice of Christ and in the interim time between Passover and Pentecost, they knew theses prophecies and they knew what the prophecies were speaking about, the coming messiah that would restore the kingdom. Peter uses the things they knew about as the evidence to prove the fact that Jesus was indeed the messiah they have been waiting for. He tells them that God had raised this Jesus from the grave on the third day. Again, an event they had all heard about and were familiar with. He illustrates that while many people thought that possibly David would be the one to restore the kingdom, David was dead and in the grave and his tomb could be seen even to that day. He concludes his argument in...

Acts 2:36

4

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified."

Based on the evidence of the argument that he presented to the people and the accompanying miracle of the Apostles speaking in foreign languages, tongues, they accepted his words and as we looked at in the last lesson...

Acts 2:37-38

5

37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

This is an important step in the building of the Church. We looked at how that the Apostles were given all knowledge through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and established in the Church as full grown, mature Christians with all knowledge and wisdom. But that isn't the process by which other citizens of this new kingdom are made. The reaction of the people there who heard Peter's sermon must be the reaction of any who would be a part of the Kingdom of the Lord.

6

"What shall we do?"

This has to be the reaction of the one who seeks to come to God through Christ, what is it that is required of man to become a child of God. What is it that God expects from man.. We saw that Solomon defined that for us in Eccl. 12, as the KJV reads...

7

"The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments."

What must we do? Peter answers that question...

Acts 2:38

8

38 Peter said to them, "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.

Solomon says to "Fear God and keep His commandments," Peter says to...

9

"To be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins"

The connection is obvious, or at least should be, to be baptized is to obey God's commandment. Isn't that what is seen in Acts 8 when after teaching Jesus to the Eunuch the Eunuch responds by saying...

Acts 8:36

10

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, Look! "Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

The point here is simple and very straight forward, you can't teach Christ without teaching baptism. And as we are going to see, you can't teach about the Church without teaching about baptism. These teachings go hand in hand.

After hearing from Peter that what they needed to do was to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins...

Acts 2:41

11

41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

That is the response of good and honest hearts to the teaching of the scriptures. That is the response of people who have believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Acts 8:37

12

37 And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Like the Eunuch, people who want a right relationship with God will come to Him, through Christ in faithful obedience, Paul says it this way in...

Rom 6:17-18

13

17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Faithful obedience through baptism is what brings man into a right relationship with God. Peter says it as plain as it can be...

1 Peter 3:21-22

14

21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

Baptism is the commandment that when obeyed frees man from the burden of his sins, puts him into contact with the blood of Christ that washes away those sins and the penalty for them, because He paid the penalty brought about by them.

15

“Baptism NOW saves you !!!”

A quick aside, there are many confusing beliefs and interpretations that religions of the world hold, things that, when I look at I just scratch my head. This is one of them. How can anyone who claims to be honest in their reading of the scriptures look at this statement and possibly come to the conclusion that baptism is not necessary for salvation? That makes no sense to me.

The people in Acts two responded and were baptized. Now did you notice what we read in verse 41?

16

“41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”

A curious wording here...

17

“That day there were added”

To what, or to whom, were they added? There really is only one possible answer that makes any sense.

In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, God had prophesied that there would be a kingdom that would start small, like a stone, and would grow to spread throughout the world and be subject to no Earthly kingdom's or government's authority. God told David that one of his descendants would sit on the throne of an eternal kingdom. Throughout the Old Testament we read of the prophecies that foretold the coming of the Christ, the one who would establish and rule over that new kingdom, the Kingdom of God. All the prophecies seen in the Old Testament point towards Christ. It would be through Him, a descendant of David and the only begotten Son of God, and in Him the prophecies would be fulfilled once and for all. Christ designated the 12 disciples to be the men, the eye-witnesses, Apostles, through whom the new kingdom would be spread and established. We read how the promised helper, the Holy Spirit, came upon the Apostles giving them all knowledge and power so that they could complete the task given to them. We have discussed Peter's sermon, preached there on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. We saw the message, Jesus is the Christ, the one through whom salvation has been made available to all men if they will but be faithful in their obedience. We saw man's response, in baptism, and then we are told that those being saved were added to them.

The "Them" has to be the Apostles, those that had been placed in the new kingdom, fully mature, with all knowledge. That is what / who those that were baptized that day were added to. The Church had its beginning in Acts chapter 2, but to be honest that's not accurate. The Church had its beginning before the foundation of the world when God set in place the plan for the redemption of man his sin. What we see in Acts is the culmination and fulfillment of God's plans and the prophecies He gave pointing towards it and Christ.

It is an interesting point to note that those earliest members of the Church understood the importance of...

Acts 2:42

18

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

So many times in the busy world we live in we hear people talking about attendance and the importance of it. These early Christians understood it. They knew that the more they immersed themselves into God's teaching in the Word, the more they immersed themselves into working for the Church and the Lord, then the more their own faith grew and became stronger. That is what the new kingdom is about.

Acts 2:43

19

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

What an exhilarating time that had to have been, watching the kingdom that had been promised come to fruition and begin to grow in its infancy. The signs and the wonders that were being done to confirm the Word, the excitement and zeal of those that were coming to God through Christ, no wonder the scriptures tell us that there was a sense of awe that they had.

I wonder, what has happened to that sense of awe? Think about when you first made the commitment to God and were baptized, the excitement, the overwhelming joy. I can't even begin to describe the number of times that I have seen people come out of that watery grave with tears in their eyes because of the joy and awe. What happens to that? We see these early converts so excited that they continually devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching. Where does the zeal go? What causes the passion to wane and the faith to start eroding? I think the answer is found when we start following our own agenda and not God's Word. Oh, we excuse, we justify, we compromise, we blame, anything and everything we can do so that we don't have to live with the guilt of our decisions, but the awe of the power of God to save us from our sins is gone. That is the wisdom of the Church, my friends, look around you, we are all here trying our best to get to heaven, to receive the reward. We are not perfect, none of us. We don't always get along because we are different people in our likes and preferences. We may have personality clashes, but when these things become the motivation for us to quit doing what God wants of us, the sin ours to bear and not the object of our angst. What happens when someone loses their awe of what God does for us through Christ. Those early Christians didn't lose theirs...

Acts 2:44-45

20

44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; **45** and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

They were so passionate in their belief that they wanted nothing more than to be with each other, in spite of difference, preferences or any other ences you can think of. They sold their property to give those in need, they had all things I common. That's what the awe of coming to God does for man, it helps him to overcome all the human emotions that so often plague us.

Acts 2:46-47a

21

46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, **47** praising God and having favor with all the people.

The key to all of this is seen here in these verses...

22

“With gladness and sincerity of heart”

Are we glad for our salvation? Are we sincere in our desire to serve God and in doing so serve each other? That is what it means to be a part of this new kingdom, this Church.

Acts 2:47b

23

47 And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Christ has accomplished His task. He has shed His blood for the sins of man and He has established the Church, the restored Kingdom of God's people. That is what the saved are added to.