

The Church

History and Origin 4

1 In our last lesson we saw the beginnings of the Church in Acts 2, though as we pointed out, the beginnings of the Church can be traced all the way back before the creation when God knew that man would need an avenue by which he could return to a covenant relationship with his creator and planned for Christ, the manifestation of God on Earth, to be that avenue through His sacrifice. The so-called scheme of redemption that God planned included the Church, the collection of His called out people. We talked about...

Acts 2:41, 46-47

2

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

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

All those people that were hearing the message of the Gospel and were believing that Jesus was the Christ and were responding in faithful obedience to His truth in baptism were being added to the first of His...

3

“Called Out”

These were the Apostles, the ones that had been placed into the Church mature, with all knowledge, they were the beginnings of the Church. These are what those in verses 41 and 47 are added to. I say it that way for a very important reason. The Church, by definition is not a what, but a who. It is not an entity or organization that stands apart from the people that it is made up of. It comes from the Greek...

Ekklesia (NT:1577)

4

From ek, "out of," and klesis, "a calling" (kaleo, "to call"), was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens "gathered" to discuss the affairs of state, **Acts 19:39**. In the Sept. it is used to designate the "gathering" of Israel, summoned for any definite purpose, or a "gathering" regarded as representative of the whole nation. In **Acts 7:38** it is used of Israel; in **19:32,41**, of a riotous mob. It has two applications to companies of Christians,

5

- a) To the whole company of the redeemed throughout the present era, the company of which Christ said, "I will build My Church," **Matt 16:18**, and which is further described as "the Church which is His Body," **Eph 1:22; 5:23**,
- b) In the singular number (e. g., Matt 18:17, RV marg., "congregation"), to a company consisting of professed believers, e. g., **Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 3:5**, and in the plural, with reference to churches in a district.

The term is not religious in nature. It is a generic term referencing any group or gathering that has come together for a specific purpose. As seen in Acts 19 it referred to a group of citizens that had gathered to talk politics, but they were there for that reason. So when we see the reference to the Church as Vines illustrates, it is talking about those that are called out of the world to the specific purpose of following after and worshipping God as the scriptures dictate. The Church is not a building, nor is it ever referred to as one. The Church is not an organization in the sense that man thinks of something as being an organization, though there is an organization to it. Christ is the head of the Church...

Eph 5:23

6

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

The Church has no Earthly headquarters. Christ sits at the right hand of God ruling His Church from heaven. It has no facility or structure that defines it in this world, like the Chrysler Tower in New York or the Sears Tower in Chicago. It is defined by and is defined by and located wherever its members are...

Matt 18:20

7

20 For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

The Church is the called-out people of God. That ends chapter two. What we then begin to see beginning in chapter three is the spreading of the Gospel by the Apostles.

Peter and John were coming through the gate called Beautiful and saw there a man lame from birth who was begging.

Acts 3:4-6

8

4 But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!" **5** And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. **6** But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!"

Remember how the attention of the people had been grabbed on the day of Pentecost when the Apostles began speaking in tongues? Miracles, signs tend to get people's attention, it is what they notice. Peter and John performed a miracle in a most public place, the gate called Beautiful. Interestingly, if you research this gate you will find that scholars are divided as to its location, most think that it was one of the nine Temple gates, though which one is debated. If the lame man was there begging we have to assume that it was a place of high traffic volume. That means a lot of people around. This is where Peter and John demand that he look at them and proclaim that they have no money, but what they do have they will give...

9

"In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!"

I don't want to imply anything devious in what they do, but I do see this encounter as being calculated by them to draw attention to what they say. The crowd of people, at least those that were regulars through this gate had seen this lame man before. Many probably knew his story, being lame

from birth. The fact that Peter and John healed this lameness is beyond anything they could imagine. They hear what Peter says and they see the man then leap up and enter the gate with them, leaping and walking proving his cure to be absolute. The miracle draws attention to the fact of the statement, and note...

Acts 3:8

10

8 With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. **9** And all the people saw him walking and praising God;

This is the set-up for the second recorded sermon in the Church. Peter sees the people that have gathered to marvel at the lame man and the commotion that his healing has caused and takes it as an opportunity to preach a sermon. In verses 11-26 of Acts 3 we see Peter addressing those people. His second sermon has many of the same elements we saw in the first sermon in Acts 2. He refers to prophecy, reciting things they knew as the evidence that this Jesus whom they offered up was indeed the Christ. The Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ is being preached.

Acts 4:1-4

11

1 As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, **2** being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. **3** And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. **4** But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

Depending on the commentary that you are looking at this number may be inclusive of the 120 and the 3 thousand from the Day of Pentecost, Adam Clark's, Barnes Notes, and Jamieson Faucet or it might be exclusive of those as is noted in the Pulpit Commentary. Take your pick, it really doesn't matter. The point is that the people were responding to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and coming in faithful obedience to God through His sacrifice. But whether the total of those that have believed and obeyed is now a little over 5,000 or a little over 8,000, it is still an impressive figure for the fledgling Church as it begins to grow in Jerusalem. Those in power among the Jews were afraid of what they saw happening. They knew that as more and more people came to believe that their power base would erode and they would no longer hold the preeminence among the people that they once had. They arrested them and put them into prison. This is where I find the dynamic really interesting. Note the next few verses...

Acts 4:13-16

12

13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. **14** And seeing the man who has been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. **15** But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, **16** saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

The fact that Peter, John, and many of the other Apostles were, in fact, uneducated and untrained. This was obvious to all who saw them and talked with them. The power of the Holy Spirit didn't turn them into Harvard graduates, it gave them all knowledge in the Church, but they were still who they were in character, in opinions, and how they were seen by the world. What is also of import is that the miracle of healing the lame man is said to be...

13

“Noteworthy”

They understood that this had not been accomplished by any Earthly means. It could only have been made to happen by God and His power. Do you see the predicament that they had? If they understood that the miracle had come from God, so did everyone else. They had no explanation for the empty tomb, they had no explanation for the things that had occurred on the Passover during the crucifixion of Christ, they had no answer for the Gospel, and that scared them, but it also made them realize that they couldn't just have all the Apostles put to death like they had with Christ, so they take a different tack...

Acts 4:17-18

14

17 But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." *18* And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

At this time there probably wasn't a whole lot more they could do. Too strong of a reaction and they might have a rebellion of the people against them on their hands. So they try to intimidate them into not preaching any more. Does this sound familiar? Look at what is happening, what has happened. You can't hardly even mention God or Jesus or prayer in our schools anymore and most assuredly no in a context of belief. You might offend those who choose not to have God in their homes. But you have to sit and listen to the political correctness propaganda that is being spread and taught. Even though most reputable scientists today acknowledge that it could not possibly be true, evolution is still taught and if creation is mentioned, it is typically only in a way that pooh-poohs it. The government and media have coined the term...

15

“Hate Crimes”

This includes even speaking out on your opinion, it that opinion happens to differ with a chosen life-style. We have stopped talking about God, Christ, and The Gospel at work for fear of losing our jobs or being seen as a radical.

The Gospel, and by extension, the Church, is spread through the teaching of it and about it. If that teaching were to be stopped, then it logically follows that the spread and growth of the Church would be stopped. This was their goal, and it's the same goal that Satan has today in trying to stifle the teaching of the truth of God through which God calls man to come and follow Him. Times really haven't changed much. Satan is still trying to stifle the spread of the Gospel by making it unpopular, politically incorrect, or even illegal to teach it and talk about it.

Acts 4:19-20

16

19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; **20** for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Despite the best efforts of the leaders to quiet the Apostles...

Acts 4:21-22

17

21 When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; **22** for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

They warned them, they threatened them, yet the response of the Apostles is that they...

18

“Cannot stop speaking”

Not that they won't, but they cannot, stop speaking. I see implied in this statement not just their recognition of the task that had been given them, but also their choice to commit themselves whole-heartedly to the accomplishment of that task, regardless of the consequences and reactions of the world. They understood that without the teaching of the Gospel, the Church could not spread...

Rom 10:14-15

19

14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? **15** How will they preach unless they are sent?

How can man come to belief unless he hears the Word of God? Faith comes from hearing the Word of God.

When they were released, Peter and John went to the other Apostles and told them what had happened.

Acts 4:24-26

20

24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, **25** who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? **26** 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'

In spite of the opposition, even violent opposition, the Apostles were committed to teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world, a world about which it had been prophesied would stand against that truth and any that would carry it to others.

The Church is growing and will continue to spread as the teaching of Christ is received by good and honest hearts.