

The Book of Acts

Bringing in a New Dispensation

Acts 2:14-21 | Miracles and the Church, Part 2 and the Accusation of Drunkenness

Summary of Sessions 1–3

Take your Bible and turn to the second chapter of Acts. Up to this point in our Acts class, we have seen:

1. Jesus' appearing to the eleven disciples for forty days after His resurrection.
2. Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples.
3. Jesus' instruction for the disciples to be His witnesses (often misapplied to us as the Great Commission), and to remain in Jerusalem until the Spirit came upon them.
4. Jesus' ascension to the right hand of the Father in Heaven.
5. The disciples in the upper room (120 altogether) to choose a replacement for Judas.
6. The choosing of Matthias.
7. The disciples in a house and the Holy Spirit coming upon them when the Day of Pentecost had fully come. A Fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in 1:8.
8. The disciples fulfilled Jesus' instruction to be His witnesses by speaking in the language of devout Jews from every nation under heaven.
9. Some in the crowd mocking and accusing the disciples of being drunk.

PROBLEMS IN CHAPTER TWO

Chapter two is one of the most volatile chapters in the New Testament. While it is an exciting chapter, the misinterpretation of it has caused much confusion. The confusion isn't from God, as God is not the author of confusion. So it must be from us. There are two primary issues that need to be addressed in chapter two.

1. Miracles (See Session 3, Part 1 for a discussion on miracles in the Bible).
2. The Beginning of the Church.

Christians have varying beliefs about when the “Church” began. These differing views create discussions that often become heated and cause division. Isn’t that exactly what the enemy wants? With just a slight change in our vocabulary, we can ease a lot of the problems and the division.

Arguably, one of the biggest points of dissension or confusion among some believers in Christ is: *when did the Church begin?*

Many people have different opinions about the Church's origins, just like any other topic. Here are the top three opinions that I believe are worth considering:

1. At Pentecost (Acts 2). Pentecost being one of the Jewish Levitical Feasts of Israel.
2. In the middle of Acts (this position is usually called mid-acts).
3. After Acts 28.

I believe the confusion arises from the English translation "Church." The word “Church” appears for the first time in Acts 2:47, where it says, *“And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

We all know what the word “church” means. It usually refers to the place we go on Sundays with the people we go with. That's okay. We call that place the Church. But it becomes a problem when we assume that the word "church" in Acts 2:47 refers to our own Sunday church. This thinking is a big issue because the early church differed from ours.

But the passage in Acts 2:47 clearly says, “church”, so what is the explanation?

The explanation lies is that Luke used the Greek word "ekklesia" instead of “church.” *Ekklesia* refers to a gathering of people for a specific or common purpose. It is any assembly of people, Christian, or non-Christian alike. In high school, you may have been called out of your class to an auditorium for an assembly. That was an *ekklesia*. It had nothing to do with a church.

The English word “Church” means, *The Lord’s house*. People assemble at the Lord’s house. The translators didn’t translate, they interpreted and their interpretation was faulty and has caused the confusion. *Ekklesia* is not the Lord’s house, in the Book of Acts it is an assembly of people regardless of where they met. The phrase "The Church is not a Building" can be confusing because it is partially correct and partially incorrect. The word "church" refers to The Lord's House, while "ekklesia" refers to the assembly of people.

There are many churches today that are not churches; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Church of Scientology, etc. While I am not saying that the Church in Acts 2 is a cult, my point is, what is called a church in our English Bible is not as we understand it today.

If we simply leave the word church out of the discussion, the problem of when the Church began goes away.

Let's rephrase the question.

When Did the Ekklesia Begin?

To fully answer the question, we have to go to Matthew 16:18, where Jesus prophesied of the *ekklesia*. Speaking to Peter, Jesus said, “*I will build my church.*” What He said was, “*I will build my ekklesia.*” I take the view that Jesus is referring to himself being the rock and that the *ekklesia* would be built upon Him. “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Jesus promised to build His assembly, and it is in Acts 2 where we see this prophecy of Jesus unfolding.

In Acts 2, an *ekklesia*, or assembly, is being built by the Lord. The passage in 2:47 states, “The Lord added to the *ekklesia*.” The word “added” is synonymous with “building.” For example, you add on to your house, or make an addition to your house. When you do that, you are building. In 2:47, the Lord is doing the building. Those who believed did so by believing the signs of the apostles, the preaching of Peter, and faith in Jesus as Messiah; plus their works and obedience. That is how we know there is a difference. Today, salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ; by grace through faith. No works are allowed. Entrance into the *ekklesia* today is not of works. We come into the *ekklesia* by grace through faith. Throughout the book of Acts, we are going to develop this.

There is no question of what formed on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. It was the *ekklesia*. If we remove the word Church, there is no controversy. When did the *ekklesia* that Jesus promise begin? On the Day of Pentecost.

Here is another question we should ask and answer.

What is the Body of Christ, in relation to the Ekklesia?

The apostle Paul speaks often about the *body of Christ*. Here are five instances where Paul uses the phrase *the body*, or *one body* (*context is not provided in the examples below, but each passage refers to the body “of Christ”—the point is he uses the phrase often*).

Romans 12:4,5, “Many members in one body...one body in Christ.”

Ephesians 2:16, “One body by the cross.”

Ephesians 4:4, “There is one body.”

Ephesians 4:16, “Increase of the body.”

Ephesians 5:23, “Savior of the body.”

Paul establishes for us that there is a body. But what is this body? Fortunately, Paul tells us:

Ephesians 1:22, “And that put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the *ekklesia*, which is *His body*.”

Colossians 1:18, “And He (Christ) is the head of the body, the *ekklesia*...”

It would be difficult to argue against it; the *ekklesia* is the body of Christ.

By using basic reasoning, we have discovered:

1. The *ekklesia* was formed on the Day of Pentecost.
2. The *ekklesia* is the *body of Christ*.

Some will argue that this is a different *ekklesia* than today. I would counter that it is the same *ekklesia*, but is in the early stages of the building process. Christ is building it, but in Acts 2, only the first floor is built. More building will come when the Lord chooses Paul in Acts 9, but that is a mystery which was yet to be revealed!

What Does it Mean to be “In Christ?”

There is another phrase Paul uses over and over his letters is “*in Christ*.” Here are just a few examples:

Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus*.”

1 Corinthians 1:2, “To them that are *in Christ Jesus*.”

Galatians 3:26, “For ye are all the children of God by faith *in Christ Jesus*.”

Galatians 3:28, “Ye are all one *in Christ Jesus*.”

Ephesians 1:1, “And to the faithful *in Christ Jesus*.”

Colossians 1:4, “Since we heard of your faith *in Christ Jesus*.”

Colossians 2:5, “The steadfastness of your faith *in Christ*.”

We shouldn't complicate it, being “in Christ” simply means believing in Jesus Christ.

Who was “in Christ”? Here is a sampling:

1. **The *ekklesia* of Judaea.** I take these to be the various *ekklesia* that formed on the day of Pentecost and the days following (Acts 2-8:1). Some refer to these Jewish believers as the Saints. Paul said that he “*was unknown by face unto the ekklesia of Judaea which were in Christ*.” Galatians 1:22 (also 1 Thessalonians 2:14).

2. **Those who walk after the Spirit.** “*There is therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*.” Romans 8:1.

3. **The ekklesia in Corinth.** *“Unto the ekklesia of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus.”* 1 Corinthians 1:2

4. Various friends and acquaintances of Paul:

- **Priscilla and Aquila** (Romans 16:3).
- **Andronicus and Junia**, *in Christ* before Paul was *in Christ* (Romans 16:7).
- **Urbane** (Romans 16:9).
- **Apelles** (Romans 16:10).
- **Epaphras**. (Philemon 23).

5. **The saints and faithful brethren in Colosse.** *“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse.”* Colossians 1:2.

Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ, from the Day of Pentecost onward, is “in Christ.”

What do we know?

The first floor, so to speak, of the ekklesia was built on the Day of Pentecost.

The ekklesia is the body of Christ.

Therefore, to be *in Christ* is to be *in the body of Christ*.

Was the body of Christ in Acts 2, the completed body of Christ?

The body of Christ, the ekklesia, that began in the Book of Acts, was the beginning of the building project that Jesus announced in Matthew 16:18. Throughout the Book of Acts, the Lord “added” to the ekklesia (Acts 2:41,47; 5:14; 11:24).

The Book of Acts and Paul's subsequent epistles focus on the building of Christ's ekklesia, a dispensational change.

A dispensation is God's System of Order.

God is unchanging, but His system of order in which he deals with mankind *can, and does*, change.

This dispensational shift is evident as the body of Christ moves from works of the law, miraculous signs, and the teachings of the twelve apostles, to the apostle Paul's message of grace.

In the new dispensation revealed to Paul by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:2), works are no longer obligatory, and signs are not necessary. This is called the dispensation of grace. Paul emphasizes the message of pure grace to the ekklesia where all believers are in one body.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28

“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” Colossians 3:11

Summarizing all the above:

1. The first floor of the ekklesia was built on the day of Pentecost.
2. The ekklesia is the body of Christ.
3. All who believe are in the body of Christ.
4. To be “in Christ,” is to be “in the body of Christ.”
5. The body of Christ began in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost.

We will develop this more as we move through our class over the following weeks or months.

Let’s now pick up our passage where we left off last week. The twelve apostles were accused of being drunk. The apostle Peter is going to set the crowd straight.

Acts 2:14-15 | *First Appeal: To the Men of Judaea* | *Prophecy: Joel 2*

In his speech, to explain what is happening, Peter will give three appeals (Men of Judaea, Men of Israel, and Men and Brethren), and he will reference three prophecies of Joel 2, Psalm 16, and Psalm 110.

Verse 14 —

But Peter, standing up with the eleven. Luke makes it clear there are now twelve apostles again (Matthias replaced Judas). All eleven stand up with Peter as one. Perhaps as a sign of what their role will be in the Kingdom, as Jesus prophesied (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). **Lifted up his voice** (Greek, *phōnēh* there were no sound systems in the ancient world. Certain buildings and theaters were constructed in such a way to amplify the voice.

Peter must have had a booming voice, since there were likely thousands of Jews gathered in the multitude (see Acts 2:41). Although Peter was not from the elite “educated” class, Luke portrays Peter as a **bold** speaker (Acts 4:13) and this fits perfectly since Jesus promised Peter would become a fisher of men and would **catch people** (See Luke 5:10). **Hearken to my words** (that is, listen closely to what I am about to say. A Literal phrasing would be, to take into the ears). Peter is about to give a speech that will change the course of history.

Verse 15 —

These are not drunken. There were hecklers in the crowd! Peter stops them cold by clearly stating they are not drunken. **The third hour of the day.** The twenty-four hours were divided into “twelve hours of the day” and “twelve hours of night.” Daytime reckoned from sunrise, or 6 AM. The third hour of the day would have been 9 AM. Daytime drunkenness was not a usual occurrence (1 Thessalonians 5:7).

Acts 2:16-21 | Fulfilled Prophecy | The Prophet Joel

Verses 16-18 —

There was no drunkenness. What they experienced was the fulfilled prophecy of the Prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32). It was not simile. **This is that** not this is ‘like’ that **spoken by the prophet Joel.**

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, That I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions:

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids In those days will I pour out my spirit.

30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, Blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, As the Lord hath said, And in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

Joel used the phrase, *and it shall come to pass afterward*. What shall come to pass? It was prophesied that light would spring up “to open blind eyes” (Isaiah 42:). Matthew 4:12-16 states, “*The people which sat in darkness saw a great light.*” This light was Jesus Christ present with them.

Afterward would come the days of the Spirit; and now on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit has come. **This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel (2:28,29).** God’s Spirit is being poured out and a supernatural event is beginning to take place; prophesying, visions, dreams.

Verses 19-21—

Between Acts 2:18 | Acts 2:19 there is a pause. If the nation of Israel had repented when he called them to repentance (we will see the call to repentance in Acts 3:18-26), all things spoken by the prophets would have been fulfilled. But on this Day of Pentecost, only the first half of the prophecy was fulfilled. The second half will not take place until, as Joel says in 2:31 “*Before the great and terrible day of the Lord*” that is, the Tribulation. The Jews will reject their Messiah, as we will see throughout Acts, and hence the pause in Joel’s prophecy between verse 18, and 19.

Wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath...blood...fire...smoke...sun shall be turned to darkness...moon into blood are all found during the Tribulation, **before that great and notable day of the Lord come** (Matthew 24:29). It will be at that time that **whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved**.

Jesus prophesied that Israel would not see his face again until they said, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” (Matthew 23:39). National acceptance by Israel of Jesus as Messiah is the prerequisite for his return.

We will look at this more closely in our next class and look at certain rules to follow when interpreting Scripture, and prophecy in general.