

Acts 1:12-2:4, The Life of the Early Church
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Overview

1. Acts 1:1-2:4 is a prolog to the rest of the book. It looks in two directions.
 - a) 1:1-11 looks back, and summarizes the life of the Lord Jesus.
 - b) 1:12-2:4 looks forward, and summarizes the life of the early church.
2. The current section will teach us valuable lessons about life in the church, then and now.

A. 1:12-14, The Believers at Prayer

Here is our first glimpse of the believers after the ascent of the Lord Jesus, and what are they doing? Praying. Consider both *what* they do and *how* they do it.

1. What do Christians do when they come together?
 - a) Current experience: "have fellowship," talk about whatever is on their minds. Depends more on common interests and social level than on being believers.
 - b) Acts 2:42, the four hallmarks of the early church: teaching, charitable work, breaking of bread, prayer.
 - c) These verses are even earlier. Before there were new converts to teach; before there were poor believers who needed charity; while the first Lord's Supper was still so near that they felt no need to commemorate it; they prayed.
 - d) Prayer is the fundamental activity of the believer, and of the church. Cf. 1 Tim. 2:1. The first activity to which Paul exhorts the church under Timothy's care is prayer.
2. Analyze the clause word by word: "these were all persevering with one accord in the prayer and the supplication."
 - a) Note the articles (lacking in AV): "*the* prayer" and "*the* supplication." The article indicates that the reader is expected to recall the item in question. "You all know that prayer is part of the life of the church. Well, I'm talking about that prayer." It's not just that they happened to pray. They met deliberately for prayer; perhaps as part of the temple prayer services (3:1). This was a regular, recognizable activity. In our case, the prayer meetings of the church.
 - b) "persevering in." AV "continued" is too weak. Josephus uses this expression to describe the attitude of the attackers of a city toward the siege. They never let up their guard for a moment. A common expression with reference to prayer: 2:42;

Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2; cf. the sense of 6:4.

- c) "With one accord." A precious characteristic of the church.
 - 1) While it is the distinctive work of the Spirit, Eph. 4:3, here the early believers show it in advance of the Spirit's coming. "He is with you, and shall be in you," John 14:17.
 - 2) Note how regularly we learn of this among the early believers: 2:1, 46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25.
 - 3) The Lord laid this down as a prerequisite for effective prayer, Matt. 18:19.
 - 4) Thus we have specific instructions that whoever first recognizes the existence of a breach, whether the offender (Matt. 5:23) or the offended (Matt. 18:15ff), is to seek out the other party and set it right.

- d) *Application*: Thus we have three important characteristics of church prayer:
 - 1) It is to be appointed, an expected part of the life of the church. "The" prayer.
 - 2) It requires discipline and dedication.
 - 3) It must be sustained by real unity among the believers.

B. 1:15-26, The Appointment of Matthias

The Scriptures preserve for us one specific episode from the life of the church *before* the coming of the Spirit. To what extent is this characteristic of our life after the Spirit has come? Fortunately, we have a similar episode a bit later in the church's life, at the appointment of the "deacons" in 6:2-4. By comparing and contrasting these two, we can gain valuable insight into how the church conducted its business.

1. Amplification of this passage

- a) 15-22, Peter's comments. As v.16 suggests, he is leading out the implications of two passages from the Psalms, quoted in v.20.
 - 1) 20a from Ps. 69:25 is from a recognized messianic psalm, and foretells the desolation to come on the enemies of the davidic ruler. vv.17-19 record the fulfillment of this prophecy.
 - 2) 20b, Ps. 109:8, a general imprecation against the wicked. David has prayed that another might take his office, and now Peter feels constrained to act in accordance with this prophecy.

- b) 23, The people present (*isthmi*) a candidate.

- c) 24-25, They pray about it.

- d) 26, Designation is confirmed by casting lots.
2. Compare with Acts 6:2-6.
- a) 2-4, The apostles suggest a need, based on their observation of circumstances. This time there is no justification from a scripture verse.
- b) 6a, The people present (*isthmi*) a candidate. Same verb as in 1:23.
- c) 6b, They pray about it, same verb as 1:24.
- d) 6c, Designation is confirmed by imposition of hands.
3. There are two differences between these accounts: how the need is recognized, and how the candidates are confirmed. In which of these is the difference due to the coming of the Holy Spirit?
- a) How are needs recognized? Do you need a verse for everything?
- 1) Acts 6 seems to show that the HS can guide us in particulars for which there are not specific scriptural guidelines. Not every particular of daily life is prescribed in the word of God. We can trust the Spirit to guide us in these matters. The alternatives are either paralysis (doing nothing where the Scriptures are silent) or twisting the Word of God to try to get it to teach what it does not. It is better to follow the example here and trust God to guide through his Spirit.
- 2) This does not mean that after Pentecost we no longer look to the Scriptures for direction! We must never act contrary to Scripture, and where the Scriptures do speak, we should seek to know and follow them.
- a> 13:44-47. Isa. 49:6 leads Paul and Barnabas to turn deliberately to the Gentiles.
- b> 15:13-21. Amos 9:11,12 leads James to suggest minimal restrictions on Gentile believers.
- 3) *Application*: The believer has two guides to life: the Scriptures, and the Spirit. Like the pillar of cloud and fire in the OT. One pillar, but sometimes you could see the cloud, other times the fire. They will never lead in separate directions, and we are happy indeed when we see both together.
- b) How are decisions confirmed? Here there does seem to be a real difference before and after Pentecost. 1:26 is the last time in the biblical history of God's people that they cast lots as a means of confirming a decision. Before the Spirit, the congregation selects two men, but only one is right. After,

the Spirit guides them to select just the right set the first time. Cf. also 13:2.

C. 2:1-4, The Coming of the Spirit

Here is the birthday of the church as the body of Christ, the coming of the HS to indwell God's people. In understanding this verse, it is important to keep three things distinct from one another: the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell in all believers; the filling of the Spirit; and being full of the Spirit.

1. The coming of the Spirit to indwell all believers. Signs: the sound of wind and the appearance of tongues of fire. These signs are never repeated later in Acts, even when people are saved and thus receive the Holy Spirit. They mark the coming of the Spirit to the church, not to individuals. Rom. 8:9, every believer has the Spirit.
2. The filling of the Spirit, v.4.
 - a) This is sometimes confused with the indwelling of the Spirit in individual believers. That would be an error. Don't confuse this with the common birthright of believers.
 - 1) It is a repeated work of God. Note its occurrences: 2:4, 4:31 (apostles); 4:8 (Peter); 9:17, 13:9 (Paul). Thus Peter is filled three times; Paul, twice. Even if you do believe that people can be saved, lost, and saved again (which I do not), do you think that Peter was lost between 2:4 and 4:8, and again between 4:8 and 4:31?
 - 2) Even more telling, the phenomenon is not unique to the NT, but experienced in the OT as well (Exodus 28:3; 31:3; 35:31). Prov. 15:4 LXX (MT is different), "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, and he who protects it shall be filled with the spirit." (Note association with speech!) Ecclesiasticus 48:12 uses the phrase to describe what happened to Elisha after Elijah's ascension. Joshua in Deut. 34:9. (NB: Only Prov. is pure *pimplhmi*; others have *en-* prefix.)
 - b) Sign: boldness in speech. The prophetic enabling. NB: In 2:4, speaking in tongues is a sign of this, not of the general indwelling!
3. For completeness, note another phrase that is distinct in Gk, being "full of" the Holy Spirit.
 - a) Occurrences: 6:3 (the seven); 6:5; 7:55 (Stephen); 11:24 (Barnabas); 13:52 (Gentile believers).
 - b) Sign: Christian character: joy (13:52), wisdom (6:3), faith (6:5; 11:24). This is said of those in whom the indwelling Spirit has control. Cf. John 12:3; it's one thing for the ointment to be in the house, another for the house to be full

of (not AV "filled with") it.

Summary

What characterized the believers in their earliest association?

1. They gave prime place to prayer.
2. They made decisions in an orderly fashion, guided by Scripture. The coming of the Spirit supplements but does not replace their orderly deliberation.
3. They reached their full potential when the Spirit came to indwell the church on the day of Pentecost.

Hymn: 152, "The Comforter Has Come"

Analysis

A. 1:12-14, Summary: The life of the early church.

1. 12 To/te u(pe/streya(n) ei)s)Ierousalh(m a)po\ o)/rous tou^ kaloume/nou)Elaiw^nos, o(/ e)stin e)ggou\s)Ierousalh(m sabba/tou e)/xon o(do/n).
2. temporal p
 - a) time: 13 kai\ o(/te ei)sh^lqon,
 - b) text: comment p
 - 1) text: ei)s to\ u(perw^|on a)ne/bhsan ... o(/ te Pe/tros kai\)Iwa/nnhs kai\)Ia/kwbos kai\)Andre/as, Fi/lippos kai\ Qwma^s, Barqolomai^os kai\ Maqqai^os,)Ia/kwbos (Alfai/ou kai\ Si/mwn o(zhlwth\s kai\)Iou/das)Iakw/bou.
 - 2) comment <uperwon>: ou(^ h)^san katame/nontes
3. 14 ou(^toi pa/ntes h)^san proskarterou^ntes o(moqumado\n th^| proseuxh^| kai th dehsei su\n gunaici\n kai\ Maria\m th^| mhtri\ tou^)Ihsou^ kai\ toi^s a)delfoi^s au)to(u)^.

B. 1:15-26, Appointment of Matthias

1. 15-22, Peter's speech: quote p. Cf. ch. 6:2-4. Here, the action is motivated by the teaching of Scripture. There, the apostles just perceive what is pleasing (to themselves? to God?). Is this consistent through the Acts, or do the believers sometimes take action based on the Scriptures? Certainly, Paul in the epistles exhorts obedience to the Scriptures. But 6:2-4 shows the possibility of spiritual leading without them (though never contrary to them).
 - a) quote f: circumstantial p
 - 1) text: 15 Kai\ e)n tai^s h(me/rais tau/tais a)nasta\s Pe/tros e)n me/sw| tw^na)delfw^ni ei)^pen
 - 2) circumstance: [h]^n te o)/xlos o)noma/twn e)pi\ to\ au)to\ w(sei\ e(kato\n ei)/kosi],
 - b) quote: ampl p
 - 1) text: comment p
 - a) text: 16)/Andres a)delfoi/, e)/dei plhrwqh^nai th\n grafh\n
 - b) comment <grafhn>: h(\n proei^pen to\ pneu^ma to\ a(/gion dia\ sto/matos Dauid peri\)Iou/da tou^ genome/nou o(dhgou^ toi^s sullabou^sin)Ihsou^na,
 - 2) ampl: chiasitic exemplification p

a> example 1: the punishment of Judas.

1> 17 o(/ti kathriqmhme/nos h)^n e)n h(mi^n
2> kai\ e)/laxen to\n klh^ron th^s diakoni/as tau/th's.
3> 18 Ou(^tos me\n ou)^n e)kth/sato xwri/on e)k misqou^
th^s a)diki/as,
4> kai\ prnhh\s geno/menos e)la/khsen me/sos,
5> kai\ e)cexu/qh pa/nta ta\ spla/gxna au)tou^.
6> 19 kai\ gnwsto\n e)ge/neto pa^si toi^s katoikou^sin
)Ierousalh/m,
7> w(/ste klhqh^nai to\ xwri/on e)kei^no th^| i)di/a|
diale/ktw| au)tw^n (Akeldama/x, tou^t' e)/stin,
Xwri/on Ai(/matos.

b> text: quote p: The OT prophesies both events.

1> quote f: 20 Ge/graptai ga\r e)n bi/blw| yalmw^n,
2> quote:
a: Basis of example 1 (Ps. 69:25):
1: Genhqh/tw h(e)/paulis au)tou^ e)/rhmos
2: kai\ mh\ e)/stw o(katoikw^n e)n au)th^|,
b: Basis of example 2 (Ps. 109:8): kai/, Th\n
e)piskoph\n au)tou^ labe/tw e(/teros.

c> example 2: comment p: Choose a replacement

1> text: 21 dei^ ou)^n tw^n sunelqo/ntwn h(mi^n
a)ndrw^n e)n pantl\ xro/nw| ... (22b) ... ma/rtura
th^s a)nasta/sews au)tou^ su\n h(mi^n gene/sqai e(/na
tou/twn.
2> comment <xronw>: w(^| ei)sh^lqen kai\ e)ch^lqen e)f'
h(ma^s o(ku/rrios)Ihsou^s, 22 a)rca/menos a)po\
tou^ bapti/sματος)Iwa/nnou e(/ws th^s h(me/ras h(^s
a)nelh/mfqh a)f' h(mw^n, ...

2. 23-26, The People's Response--cf. ch. 6:6, *esthsan*,
proseucamenoi, action. Here: cast lots. There: lay hands on. With
the intervening coming of the HS, no need for an outward test.
- a) 23 kai\ e)/sthsan du/o,)Iwsh\f to\n kalou/menon Barsabba^n,
o(\s e)peklh/qh)Iou^stos, kai\ Maqqi/an.
- b) quote p
1) quote f: 24 kai\ proseuca/menoi ei)^pan,
2) quote: Su\ ku/rie, kardiognw^sta pa/ntwn, a)na/deicon o(\n
e)cele/cw e)k tou/twn tw^n du/o e(/na
25 labei^n to\n to/pon th^s diakoni/as tau/th's kai\
a)postolh^s, a)f' h(^s pare/bh)Iou/das poreuqh^nai ei)s
to\n to/pon to\n i)/dion.
- c) 26 kai\ e)/dwkan klh/rous au)toi^s,
d) kai\ e)/pesen o(klh^ros e)pi\ Maqqi/an,
e) kai\ sugkateyhfi/sqh meta\ tw^n e(/ndeka a)posto/lwn.

C. 2:1-4, Coming of the Spirit

1. 1 Kai\ e)n tw^| sumplhrou^sqai th\n h(me/ran th^s penthkosth^s
h)^san pa/ntes o(mou^ e)pi\ to\ au)to/.
2. 2 kai\ e)ge/neto a)/fnw e)k tou^ ou)ranou^ h)^xos w(/sper
ferome/nhs pnoh^s biai/as
3. kai\ e)plh/rwsen o(/lon to\n oi)^kon ou(^ h)^san kaqh/menoi:
4. 3 kai\ w)/fqhsan au)toi^s diamerizo/menai glw^ssai w(sei\
puro/s,

5. kai\ e)ka/qisen e)f' e(/na e(/kaston au)tw^n,
6. 4 kai\ e)plh/sqhsan pa/ntes pneu/matos a(gi/ou,
7. manner p
 - a) text: kai\ h)/rcanto lalei^n e(te/rais glw/ssais
 - b) kaqw\s to\ pneu^ma e)di/dou a)pofqe/ggesqai au)toi^s.