

Acts 2.37-47: Developments in the *Church* at Jerusalem Pt3

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:41-47)

I. The expansion of the church (from 120 to thousands)

A. Peter gave the gospel offer (its duty, promise, warrant, and exhortation)

1. The duty of the gospel offer: **Repent and be baptized**
2. The promise of the gospel offer: **for the forgiveness of your sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit**
3. The warrant of the gospel offer: **the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off** (Acts 2.39a), and the promise is for...everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.
4. The summary exhortation of the gospel offer (save yourselves by repentance-baptism) **And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (2.40).**

B. Many embraced the gospel offer (in the expansion from 120 to thousands)

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (2.41-42).

1. To what were the new converts added?

To the universal family of God? Yes, but this text is more specific and has a more specific answer in the context of the history of redemption. They are added to the church at Jerusalem, the local expression of the new covenant family of God. Accordingly, Luke reports how the Lord added to the number, a circumscribed number (2.47), which is eventually identified as the church (Acts 5.11, **great fear came upon the whole church**) which is first the local church at Jerusalem (8.1, **there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria**), then a local church at Antioch (13.1, **Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas...and Saul**). That the church can be scattered (8.1; 9.31) guides our conception of the church universal that has local expressions, both are the church: the church is all Christians in the world, and the church is such and such local gathering. A local church is the church in the world in a particular place, a particular flock with a particular eldership. Elders simply "emerge" in Acts. The office was present in the synagogue in descent from the OT. When Jesus says, "Tell it to the church" He is referring to the "court" system of elder-judges who represent the family of God and exercise the keys of the kingdom (as Acts 6.12 where the apostles are in court). These elders function in local settings for Luke reports that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders *in every church* they founded in their missionary endeavors (14.23, **they...appointed elders for them in every church...**).

This understanding of the "addition" (Acts 2.41, to what added?) is confirmed by Jesus' teaching on the church, and by John's anticipation of it in his baptism of repentance. In Matthew 16 and 18, we have the promise of our Lord regarding the church He will build and how it will operate in a fundamental way. The church He will build is the new Israel (He says, it is "my" church, 16.18) in local settings (in which a process of discipline will occur and keys of the kingdom will be exercised by spiritual leaders, 18.17-18). John anticipated that new family (the new children of Abraham, Lk 3.8) by calling people to enter it through the door of repentance-baptism (Lk 3.3), to thus be spared judgment by Messiah's baptism with fire (Lk 3.9). Now, after the coming of the Spirit, Peter calls for entry into the new people of God by repentance-baptism (for which John paved the way, unwittingly) and therefore into the church (as Jesus anticipated).