

Acts 2.37-47: Developments in the Church at Jerusalem Pt4

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).

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

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

B. Many embraced the gospel offer (2.41-42).

1. To what were the new converts added?

By repentance-baptism, they were added to the church Jesus promised to build (Mat 16.18), the new Israel ("my" church) in local settings (in which a process of discipline will occur and keys of the kingdom will be exercised by spiritual leaders).

2. To what did the new converts devote themselves as the fruit of repentance?

The devotion in view is that of perseverance. They entered the church and persevered (**continued steadfastly**, KJV) in four overlapping activities: 1) they listened to and embraced the teaching of the apostles, 2) they persisted in fellowship with the apostles and one another, 3) they broke bread together, and 4) they prayed together. These things are described in broad terms: doctrine is not just what the apostles taught, but their teaching of it; fellowship indicates community in the senses of mutual communication and sharing of one's self and goods; breaking of bread suggests both hospitality at meals and mutuality at the Lord's Table; prayers may be public (at the temple) or private (in homes), but they had a context of mutuality in the study of Scripture. New Christians devoted themselves to the word of God with one another in love.

3. What is the connection of this devotion to repentance-baptism?

In repentance, they turned from themselves, from their sins, and from the crooked people to Jesus as risen messianic King (2.38) and to His church, the new covenant family into which they entered by baptism. They entered the local church, and persevered in it as v. 42 describes.

4. How should we understand the following things so as not to leave it all frozen in the past: we do not have apostles to teach us today; we do not attend temple gatherings today; we do not eat together daily or have communion daily? [cf. the move from seedling to full grown plant]

5. What can we learn from the bond of entry into the church and persevering in it?

Entering the church by repentance-baptism was the point at which the things described in v. 42 began. We cannot separate the continuing from the beginning. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the obedience of repentance-baptism included a commitment to Christ (v. 38) and His church (v. 42). Surely, then, details of the baptismal commitment were taught to them in the **many other words** of Peter's sermon (2.40: **with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them**), as he called his listeners to leave the old and enter the new family through the door of repentance-baptism (**40b: Save yourselves from this crooked generation**). Accordingly, the core things to which Peter called them, the core things of their commitment to the church in baptism are the study of Scripture, the mutuality of fellowship, hospitality, the Table, and prayer. Therefore, the command to receive baptism in repentance is a command to commit yourself to the church of Christ in a local expression where the apostolic word of Christ is taught in gatherings for new temple worship that includes giving, prayer, baptism, and communion. Furthermore, the command of repentance-baptism is a command to join the membership of a local church. The commitment indicated here is the essence of a covenant of membership. Also, if you are a baptized member of a local church and you leave that church, this command of baptism indicates your duty to make covenant with another local expression of the body of Christ. It is not necessary to repeat your baptism (whether as an infant or as an adult); necessary is the renewal of the baptismal covenant (or its regularization) that takes place when you join a local church. The membership covenant (like a marriage covenant) is a public vow before God and many witnesses that expresses a willingness to be held accountable in the way of Acts 2.42.