

Acts 2.37-47: Developments in the Church at Jerusalem Pt5

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, 2.38-40 (its duty, promise, warrant, and exhortation)

B. Many embraced the gospel offer, 2.41-47

1. To what were the new converts added? There were added to the local church.
2. To what did the new converts devote themselves as the fruit of repentance? ...to the things listed in 2.42: apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.
3. What is the connection of this devotion to repentance-baptism? By repentance-baptism, they entered the local church, and persevered in it in the ways v. 42 describes.
4. Why is v. 42 not frozen in the past? ...not frozen in the historical-redemptive past because the apostolic seed becomes post-apostolic plant (infant church grows up).

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

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 to His church (v. 42) and thus to the study of Scripture, the mutuality of fellowship, hospitality, the Table, and prayer. In turn, the command to receive baptism in repentance is a command to 1) commit yourself to the church of Christ in a local expression, and 2) to join the membership of a local church by a public vow for accountability in the way of Acts 2.42.

6. On the baptismal commitment and covenant of membership, what elements of NT church worship (of the six) are not on a list derived from 2.41-47? What we have are preaching, prayer, sacraments, and giving; missing are reading and singing.

7. How can we complete the list based on what we have in Acts 2?

The quoting of Scripture by Peter is reading in part and suggests that reading have a meaningful place, as does the learning of apostolic doctrine. We arrive at singing from the nature of praise because most of the singing in worship is prayer and praise.

8. What common (overarching) spirit is key to fulfillment of the membership covenant of 41-47? It is one anothering love that flows from loving obedience to God in the study of Scripture in new temple worship by means of the six elements of worship.

9. What are some practical graces required to fulfill the covenant of membership in the challenges of personal relationships between diversely sanctified sinners?

Any of us may overdo it in one way or another. We all need our own space and should not be over reading each other's temperatures. Sometimes we should comment on what we sense and other times remain silent. We need wisdom and balance. A help in balance is the principle of yieldedness of Phil 4.5 (a submissive, yielding, reasonable spirit: how we are to be known by all). Still, we over step and need to be forgiven charitably. We also need to have a forgiving spirit when our feet are crunched. We pray for forgiveness acknowledging our own sins to the degree that we forgive and because we forgive. We all need complete patience in speaking the truth to one another in love. We must engage in conversation to communicate back and forth in family mutuality and in the giving and receiving of pastoral care.

10. How can we interface the covenant of membership of Acts 2.41-47 with 1 Tim 3.15 (if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth)? The covenant of membership with a local church is one way of fulfilling the duty (the ought) of good behavior in the household of God. The church is a family, so the membership covenant is a family covenant with loving one another as Christ has loved us as its central dynamic.