

Miracles, Signs, Wonders and More

Acts 2:41—47

Previous lessons have made the point that the events happening around the Feast of Pentecost are all a continuation of the Kingdom program. The Millennial Kingdom was announced in the Old Testament (Zechariah 8; Isaiah 11, 60) and then it was proclaimed to be at hand in the four Gospels (Matthew 3:2; 4:7; 10:7; Luke 16:16). The fulfillment of countless prophecies was set to happen within a very short time. Peter acknowledged this advancement in Israel's Prophetic program by announcing that the events of Pentecost were in fulfillment of prophecies in Joel. Peter also addressed only Jews and purposefully avoided Gentiles since God was still dealing with Israel as a nation.

As we continue deeper into the book of Acts, there are many other indications that Peter is continuing his ministry with Israel according to Prophecy. In other words, nothing has changed, even after Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. He left the 12 Apostles with the instructions to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 8). After Jesus Christ was taken up, two men in white apparel told them that Jesus Christ would return to earth in the same manner that He left. This is consistent with Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 14:4). His return to this earth is clearly spelled out in Scripture, including in Revelation 19:11—16 where Christ is pictured coming in on a white horse. He is coming in judgment to remove evildoers and take the throne in Jerusalem. He is also coming to wed Israel at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7).

These events are all a part of Prophecy. There is no Mystery doctrine contained in what Peter is preaching. Everything he taught was already in Scripture. Paul, however, was given the Mystery doctrine directly by Jesus Christ, and does not include the coming of the Holy Spirit to Israel or the Second Coming. He teaches and preaches a mystery that was not revealed until given to him after his conversion (Romans 16:25—26; Ephesians 3:1—5).

Those who are perceptive to dispensational changes will note that the early part of the book of Acts contains many of the same elements found in the Gospels and in the prophets. Peter is preaching the same message, this message is given only to the nation of Israel, baptism is required for salvation, miracles, signs and wonders are being performed and the believers sold all their possessions.

The same message

Previous lessons pointed out in detail that Peter did not change his message from what he was preaching in the Gospels. The Disciples were to go out and preach the Kingdom of God (or of heaven) (Matthew 10:7). This Millennial Kingdom was the focus of the Disciples, as was evidenced by their question to Jesus Christ, "...wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) This is all they were taught, and this is what they were to teach and preach. This is why the Kingdom was finally offered in Acts 3:19. Although many people teach that the Kingdom was offered all through the Gospels, it was actually announced to be "at hand" and was finally offered in Acts 3. Those who teach the Kingdom was offered while Jesus was on earth, especially those who believe the church began in Acts 2, do so to preserve their doctrine. They understand that the Kingdom could not be offered after the beginning of the Church, the Body of Christ. Since they put the formation of the Church in Acts 2, Peter could not have offered the Kingdom in Acts 3 and therefore they say it was offered in the Gospels. Many also say it was rejected at the cross. In actuality, it was rejected with the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7.

The same nation

Another indication that there has been no dispensational change in early Acts is that the message is being preached to the same people as in the Gospels. God is dealing exclusively with the nation of

Israel. They were the ones through whom He would give His Law and all the writers of Scripture came through (Romans 9:4). This is why salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22). Since God was working solely through Israel, the Gentiles were excluded from the blessings and could not come to God except through Israel (Ephesians 2:11—12).

Continuation of baptism

We also notice that the baptism of John was being continued by Peter. This only makes sense since Peter is preaching the same message of repentance and baptism (Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:38). As mentioned in previous lessons, baptism has its roots in the Mosaic Law (Hebrews 9:10) and was being used to purify and set apart Israel as priests. This is how Aaron and his sons were inducted into the priesthood, as were the Levites (Leviticus 8). Since Israel will act as priests in the Millennial Kingdom, they have to be purified and set apart for this service unto the Lord (Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10). It's unfortunate that many steal what belongs to Israel to take it for themselves. Those who think they are a holy priesthood also think they will be ruling on this earth because this is where God's priests (believing Israel) will be ruling. This is what happens when Scripture is not rightly divided.

Miracles, signs and wonders

Whenever you see miracles, signs and wonders, you should almost automatically think of Israel and the preaching of the Kingdom being at hand. All through the Gospels and into early Acts we see miraculous demonstrations being performed. The honest Bible student will understand that these manifestations began to disappear beginning with the Apostle Paul and were no longer mentioned after the end of Acts.

In contrast to this period of the proclamation of the Kingdom is this age of Grace. All these signs were performed to get Israel's attention, and to announce the coming Millennial Kingdom. The healings, signs and wonders all belonged to Israel's prophetic program, and they were now experiencing a foretaste of that promised Kingdom. However, when Paul came on the scene, Israel had been put aside, the prophetic clock had stopped and the healings, signs and wonders began to fade away (1 Corinthians 13:8—13). The Disciples were commissioned to heal the sick and raise the dead as they went out with the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 10:1; Mark 16:19), but Paul was commissioned to preach the Gospel of Grace without the signs and without water (1 Corinthians 1:17). In fact, even though Paul had been given the spiritual gift of healing early in his ministry (Acts 19:11), he later was not able to perform any works of healing (2 Timothy 4:20; 1 Timothy 5:23). This is tangible proof that there was a change in how God was dealing with mankind beginning with Paul. Peter, however, is not introducing any changes, other than an advancement of the Kingdom program.

Sell all

One last proof that Peter was continuing the Kingdom program of the Gospels is that they were to sell all they possessed. This is exactly what Peter and the Disciples did (Luke 5:11; Luke 18:28) as did the church in early Acts (Acts 4:32—35), in following the command found in Luke 12:33. The promise was that they would have treasure in heaven, and that they would receive many times more than what they gave up when they entered the Millennial Kingdom (Matthew 19:29). God promised to give them what they needed and in faith they would sell all they had (Matthew 6:34). He was actually getting this believing remnant ready for the seven-year Tribulation, which was coming in a few short months.

In order to force fit this into this Dispensation of Grace, many teach that we are to be ready to sell all if the Lord tells them to do so. This twists the teachings and examples put forth in Scripture. Those who did not sell everything could not be a disciple of Jesus (Luke 14:33). They were to give up everything in order to follow Him. Fortunately, we are not under this command in this Dispensation of Grace.

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