

Lesson 29

The Kingdom in The Book of Acts Part II

What were the effects of the public miracles worked by Jesus in the Gospels and later by the Apostles in the Book of Acts? Why do you think that we no longer see miracles of the same size, scope and publicity of the miracles in the Gospels and Acts?

I. Introduction

- a. While it is true that the Church emerges as the primary theme of the epistles, the period covered by the Book of Acts must be seen as a transitional period in which characteristics belonging to **both** the Kingdom and the Church are present.
- b. The transition that we observe in the Book of Acts is **away** from the specific message of the imminence of the Kingdom as it was presented in the period of the Gospels and a movement toward an emphasis upon the Church.
- c. Another transitional element observed in the Book of Acts is the fading from view of the great **public** miracles so much in evidence during the period of the Gospels, and which, are notably absent even up to the present day.
- d. One theory which seeks to explain the **disappearance** of these public miracles is connected to the Mediatorial Kingdom and is discussed below.

II. The Re-offer of the Kingdom

- a. Immediately following the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believers present on the Day of Pentecost, a commonly missed fact of that period is that it constitutes a **re-offer** of the Kingdom to the nation of Israel.
- b. During his earthly ministry our Lord specifically **foretold** of such a re-offer. This was presented in the form of a parable of the “kingdom of heaven” in which a king makes a marriage feast for his son. Matt 22:3-4 *And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. KJV*
- c. In the parable two calls go out to the invited guests. The first call bids them come but they would not come. The second call then goes out in which the king says that “all things are **ready**”
- d. Our Lord presented the first call to the nation of Israel and it was rejected by them. In the post-Pentecostal offer as described in the Book of Acts, it is the **Apostles** who now re-offer the Kingdom to Israel but again the offer is rejected.
- e. The record of this re-offer is specifically recorded in **Acts 3**. Beginning with Peter’s healing of the man who was lame from birth; an audience is drawn from among the worshippers in the temple. Acts 3:10-11 *And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. 11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon’s, greatly wondering. KJV*
- f. Peter begins addressing the assembled crowd as the **nation of Israel**, with a message from the God of their fathers and reminds them that they are the children of the prophets. Acts 3:12-13 *And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. KJV*
- g. He identifies Jesus as the divine **Messiah** sent to Israel whom they had denied and killed; but God raised Him from the dead. Acts 3:14-16 *But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. KJV*
- h. Now, they must **repent** in order for the great social, economic, and political blessings of the Kingdom to be made available to them for these blessings must rest upon a spiritual foundation in order to be made manifest to them. Acts 3:19-20 *19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, KJV*
- i. Should Israel accept this offer of the Kingdom, God will send Jesus, who has been appointed as Messiah **to restore** to them all things connected with the Kingdom. Acts 3:20-21 *And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. KJV*

III. The Miracles of the Book of Acts

- a. When one observes the pattern of **spectacular** miracles revealed in the Acts it becomes a matter of striking contrast to the present day, a time in which there are virtually no public miracles of the size and scope seen in both the Gospels and Acts.
- b. Various **theories** have been posited to explain this lack of spiritual signs and wonders in our time:
- c. Some argue that these miracles are **still present** in the life of the Christian Community. However, since there is no physical evidence of such occurrences in our day we must conclude that this is false.
- d. There are others who suggest that the absence of the miraculous elements in our day is due to the **decline** in the spirituality of God’s people. They conclude that spiritual revival will restore to the Church another era of apostolic miracles.
- e. The response to this position is that there have been many great spiritual **revivals** as well as great spiritual leaders throughout the history of the Church but we have seen no such corresponding rise in miraculous phenomena.
- f. Others have argued that the purpose of miracles in the apostolic era was to **authenticate** both the message and the messengers of early Christianity. If such was useful then why not now?
- g. Perhaps the best explanation of these miracles is that in Scripture the great exhibitions of miraculous divine power are invariably **connected** with the Mediatorial Kingdom of God.

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- h. This was seen when the Kingdom was established at Sinai and did not entirely **disappear** until the departure of the Shekinah Glory from the Temple. From that time on there is no record of miraculous events until Christ.
- i. Miraculous events were predicted upon the arrival of Messiah and shall be throughout His future reign on earth. When Jesus reaffirmed to John the Baptist that He was the “one”, He reaffirmed that fact by **citing** the miracles predicted in the OT. Matt 11:4-5 *Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. KJV*
- j. Miracles are the signs of the presence of the Kingdom, given primarily as a **testimony** to the nation of Israel, to whom the divine covenant belonged and upon whose repentance depended its imminent establishment on earth. Heb 6:5 *And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, KJV*
- k. This explains why, following the crisis of Jewish rejection reached at the end of **Acts 28** and the destruction of Jerusalem, the age of great public miracles came to an end. Acts 28:28 *Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. KJV*

IV. Jewish Opposition

- a. The issue of the Messiahship of Jesus does **not change** between the Gospel period and that of the book of Acts. The hardening of the Jewish opposition to the message of Jesus as Messiah moves through a progression ending in Acts 28.
- b. The Jewish leaders may have felt that with the death of Jesus they had effectively **disposed** of His Messianic claims and had hoped that this sect would quickly fade in popularity. Acts 5:38-39 *And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: 39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. KJV*
- c. When the movement grew rather than subsided, the temper of the Jewish leaders became hardened to the point of murdering Stephan who, while defending himself, accused the Jewish **authorities** of rejecting the Messiah and the Kingdom. Acts 7:51-54 *Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. 54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. KJV*
- d. This event opened wide the floodgates of **persecution** of believers which had the effect of spreading the news of Jesus as Messiah and ultimately lead to the conversion of Paul on the Damascus road. Acts 9:1-2 *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. KJV*
- e. The Jews from Antioch carried their opposition to the message of Jesus as Messiah throughout the **region** and provided further evidence that once more the Jewish nation was losing an opportunity to gain the Mediatorial Kingdom of God on earth. Acts 14:27 *And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. KJV*
- f. Paul’s address to the Jews of Rome was the **final step** in the second rejection of Jesus as Messiah and instead of ending with a benediction, the meeting was ended with an imprecation. Acts 28:27-28 *For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. KJV*

V. Summary of the Acts Period

- a. Preaching in the period of Acts displays **both** a proclamation of the Kingdom as a possibility for Israel and secondly, the testimony of the Church as the spiritual nucleus of the coming Kingdom.
- b. Initially, the message went out **exclusively** to the Jews but as the tide of Jewish opposition grew, there was a shift in emphasis. The period begins with the Kingdom in first place and the Church having almost no distinguishable separate identity.
- c. As the period progresses, the Church begins to assume a more prominent place and the Kingdom recedes. At the same time there is a shift from Jewish national primacy toward a **universality** in which no national distinctions appear.
- d. By the end of the Book of Acts Israel fails to **enter** into the promised rest of the Kingdom and shortly thereafter Jerusalem is destroyed. Thus we enter the terminal phase of the age between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Rapture of the Church.

VI. Application

- a. Gods’ Spirit desires to bring His people into their “rest”. Gen 6:3 says: *“My spirit shall not always strive with man.”* However, as the nation of Israel demonstrates to us, God is longsuffering but there does come a day in which He leaves off striving against those who resist.
- b. Over what areas of your life does God’s Spirit strive with you?
- c. Will you continue to strive against the Spirit in these areas?