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Exploratory Bible Study on the Acts of the Apostles: *Acts through the Eyes of the Early Christians*

Bible Study #3

The Life of the First Church

Read Acts 2:42-47

Vocabulary:

Verse 42

- “fellowship” (Gk. = *koinonia*), “close mutual relationship, participation, sharing in”
- “bread” (Gk. = *artou*)
- Actually “*the prayers*” (Gk. = *tais proseuchais*)

Verse 43

- “fear” (Gk. = *Phobos*) reverence for God, i.e., ‘holy fear’

Verse 47

- “those being saved” (Gk. = *sozomenous*), “saved, rescued, cured, made well.”



Q: What difference does it make the context in which we understand that the early Christians were continuing “in prayers” or “in *the prayers*”? How does this translation affect our image of the Early Christian Church?

“The Jews had practiced liturgical prayer for centuries, the preeminent prayers being the Psalms. Because the Psalms point so clearly to Christ, Christians immediately incorporated them into NT worship.” –*the Orthodox Study Bible*

Q: How would you describe the life of the early Orthodox Church as presented here?

Q: (*For Orthodox*) What do we continue to see of this life in the Orthodox Church today?

Q: What are the results of this manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church?

“You should all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father. Follow too the presbytery (priesthood), as you would the Apostles; and respect the deacons as you would God’s law. Nobody must do anything that has to do with the Church without the bishop’s approval. You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or someone he authorizes...” St. Ignatius of Antioch (106 A.D., *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*)

Q: Referring to what we have read in Acts thus far and the quote from St. Ignatius above, what is he saying about how authority is exercised in the early Church? How do we see this being lived out in the life of the Church described here in Acts?

Application:

- Q: What do you find appealing about the witness of our early Christian brothers and sisters?
- Q: How can you and I follow in the example of our forefathers and mothers in the early Church?
- Q: What aspects of this common life would you like to see more in your/our church?

Read Acts 3:1-10

- Q: What further aspects of Jewish worship do we see incorporated into the life of the early Church and continuing in the Orthodox Church to this day? Why is this significant?

John 14:12-14 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

Q: How are these words of Christ made manifest in the witness of the Apostles?

“In truth, much more did they increase their glory by despising glory. They showed that what had just taken place was no human act, but a divine work; and that it was up to them to join with the beholders in admiration, rather than to receive it from them.” (St. John Chrysostom, Homily IX on Acts III)

- Q: What is so significant about the healing of the lame man? From the people’s reaction and the Apostles’ response, what does it teach us about the Apostles’ ministry?

Read St. Peter’s Sermon Acts. 3:11-16

- Q: What does St. Peter’s sermon teach us concerning the connection between faith and healing? Between the body and the soul?

"For this is the *great* error of *our* day that the *physicians* separate the *soul* from the *body....*" (Hippocrates, 6th Century B.C.)

- Q: Who does St. Peter indicate that Jesus is?

Acts 3:17-26

- Q: What is St. Peter’s indictment against his fellow Jews and what does he urge them to do?
- Q: What do we learn further about the connection between repentance and healing?

Application:

- ❖ How can we strive to manifest the attitude of the Apostles with regard to the work that God would do in us and through us as a witnessing Christian community here in Annapolis? In practical terms, what would that look like for us as a church community?
- ❖ How can we cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit to help make our *koinonia* as a church a place of healing in Christ for those who join us?