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Exploratory Bible Study on the Acts of the Apostles: “The Book of Acts through the Eyes of the Early Christians”

Bible Study #4

Review from 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 are the four pillars of the worship of our early Orthodox forebears?

Q: What other signs characterized their life together as Christians?

Q: What was the fruit of these labors?

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

Read Acts 3:1-10

“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: What do we see here in the early Church in terms of the connection between the Apostles’ relationship to Judaism and their Apostleship in Christ?

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 so significant?

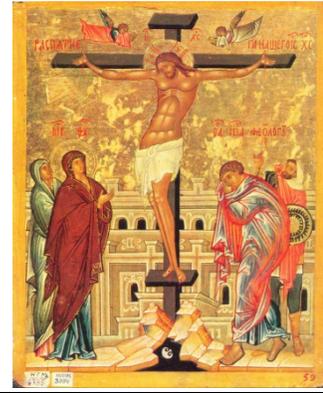
The three psalms read in the Ninth Hour--Psalms **83, 84 and 85**— foretell of God’s Incarnation, and Messiah’s salvation for all mankind: “*For better is one day in Thy courts than thousands elsewhere... Thou hast turned back the captivity of Jacob, Thou hast made all Thy wrath to cease. Thou hast forgiven the iniquities of Thy people Mercy and truth are met together (at the Cross)... Truth arose from the earth, and Righteousness looked down from heaven...All the Gentiles Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord...Thou hast delivered my soul from the nethermost hades...Guide me, O Lord, in Thy way, give Thy strength unto Thy servant... Work in me a sign unto good... for thou, O Lord, has holpen and comforted me.*”

Prayer of St. Basil (4th Century) for the Ninth Hour

“O Master, Lord Jesus Christ...Who hast brought us even unto this present hour, wherein Thou didst hang upon the life-giving Tree... cleanse us, spare us O Lord deliver us from the hand of the Adversary, and forgive us our sins, and mortify our carnal mind...that putting aside the old man, we

may be clothed in the new one, and live for Thee, our Master and Benefactor; and that thus by following Thy commandments, we may attain to rest eternal, wherein is the abode of all them that rejoice..."

Q: How did the Ninth Hour Prayers take on a deeper and fulfilled meaning through Christ's incarnation, salvific death and promise of paradise to the thief? How is this reflected in the Psalms and in the Ninth Hour Prayer of St. Basil?



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 here?

"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 and the ministry of Christ's Church?

Read St. Peter's Sermon Acts. 3:11-26

Vocabulary: Verse 22 "Prophet" (Gk.= *propheten*), "one who has insight into the Divine will and possesses the power of inspired utterance." As Orthodox, we believe Christ is the Prophet of prophets, the Great High Priest, and the King of Kings—He who not only brings the message of salvation, but enacts salvation through His saving Incarnation, death, and resurrection. He alone as God has power to give life and power over death, the ability to forgive the sins of the people.

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 and faith* 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?
- ❖ 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?