

The Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2

Review from Chapter 2:1-39

- The disciples continued “in one accord” and in the same place on the Day of Pentecost.
- The Holy Spirit descends with a roar like the rushing of wind.
- ‘Tongues of fire’ rested on the Apostles and those gathered denoting the uncreated energy of God and giving the gift of proclaiming the Good News (Evangelia) with one, unified voice. St. John the Baptist and Forerunner had prophesied that Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt. 3:11).
- Those gathered in Jerusalem, from every corner of the earth, hear the Apostles in their own language in keeping with Christ’s final words to His Disciples to “preach the Gospel to all nations” (Matt. 28:18-20).
- St. Peter preaches the Gospel from the Old Testament prophecies of Joel and the Psalms. Many of those who heard him were convicted and ask what they must do. Peter responds: repent, be baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (vv. 37-38).
- The icon of Pentecost reveals the Descent of the Holy Spirit from a theological perspective: the unity of the Holy Apostles gathered, the tongues of fire resting on the Apostles, the varying gifts as seen in the different gestures, the space in center vacant because Christ has ascended to heaven, He remains both with His Church in the “breaking of the bread,” the Eucharist (v. 42) and Head of His Church. The ‘old man’ (‘*Cosmos*’) in the bottom center represents fallen man, wearied and aged by the reign of sin. The 12 scrolls are the Gospel of hope, new life in Jesus Christ, preached by the 12 Apostles.

Chapter 2:40-47

Q: What three things did Peter instruct the men of Jerusalem to do (vv. 38-41) and what was its fruit?

Q: What does “being saved” in verse 41 mean? What is incumbent on those who responded to St. Peter’s homily?

“They did not say, How shall we be saved? But, ‘What shall we do?’... ‘Repent,’ says he, ‘and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.’ (v. 38) He does not yet say, ‘Believe,’ but, ‘Be baptized every one of you.’ For this they received in baptism.” (St. John Chrysostom, Homily VII on Acts 2:37)

Q: What is the practice in the Orthodox Church today for those coming to faith?

Acts 2:42-47

Q: What characterizes the worship and life of the early Orthodox Church?



n.b. “prayer,” verse 42 in the original Greek is “ταῖς προσευχαῖς,” i.e., “the prayers.”

Q: What is the difference in connotation between: “they continued steadfastly in... prayers” and “they continued steadfastly in... the prayers,” as is written in the original Greek?

Q: What are the 4 pillars of worship in the early Orthodox 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 AD, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*)

Q: What is the message and lesson of (or ‘take away’ from) vv. 42-47?

Chapter 3

Acts 3:1-10

Q: What does this miraculous healing of the lame man by the Apostles Peter and John mean for the nascent Church and her ministry? What is the lesson here?

“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.” (Jn. 14:12)

Q: How does the now healed man react? What does he do (vv. 8-10)?

“The act made manifest the Resurrection, for it was an image of the Resurrection... ‘And he leaping up stood, and walked.’ (v.8) Perhaps it was by way of trying himself that he put it thus to further proof, whether perchance the thing done might not be to no purpose.... Some say that he did not even know how to walk. ‘And he entered with them into the temple.’ Of a truth it was marvelous. The Apostles do not urge him; but of his own accord he follows, by the act of following pointing out his benefactors. ‘And leaping and praising God;’ not admiring them, but God that wrought by them.” (St. John Chrysostom, Homily VIII on Acts 3:1)

Acts 3:11-26

Q: How does the Apostle Peter’s respond to the crowd of those amazed by the healing of the lame man? What is significant in how he begins his response (vv. 11-16)?

n.b. “Prince of life,” (v. 15) is in the Greek, “Ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς, more readily, “AUTHOR of life.”

Q: What is the convicting juxtaposition St. Peter gives to the Jews there assembled in verses 14-15?

“Observe again how he speaks covertly concerning Christ’s power, showing that He raised Himself: just as in his first discourse he had said, ‘Because it was not possible that He should be holden of it; (ch. 2.24),’ so here he says, ‘And killed the Prince of Life.’ (v. 15) It follows that the Life He had was not from another. The prince (or author of evil would be he that first brought forth evil; the prince or author of murder, he who first originated murder; so also the Prince (or Author) of life must be He Who has Life from Himself.” (St. John Chrysostom, Homily IX on Acts 3:12)

Q: Having convicted the Jews of their great sin against God “... you denied the Holy One and the Just... and killed the Author of life,” what does Peter offer them now (vv. 17-21)?

n.b. V. 19, “Repent” (Gk. Μετανοήσατε) = “a change of heart, a change of mind;” in an Orthodox context it means a complete turning from sin and self-will, to God and His will and way.