

Acts: Are You Living Your Life in the Kingdom or Outside of It?

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I. Introduction

When you read the book of Acts, do you see ancient history, how the Church began some 2,000 years ago, or do you see what the power of Christ can do in your life today? Acts is not just recorded history concerning the first 30 years of the Church, it's a vivid picture of what life in Jesus' Kingdom is like. That is, if you walk with Jesus in His Kingdom through everyday life, you'll experience His power, guidance, and salvation.

II. Acts Reveals the First 30 Years of the Church but What's Jesus Telling You About Life Today?

The ending of Acts seems abrupt. What happened to Paul? The story's not over. Indeed it was not. But Jesus is not just telling you a story about the apostle Paul. He's telling you a story about you. Jesus wants you to take stock of your story; where does your story fit into what He's doing in history today? Under Roman law, Paul's accusers had two years to come to Rome and bring their charges against him. If they failed to appear, Paul would've been released and according to church history he was (evidence for this also exists in Scripture. It reveals two Roman imprisonments not just one. In his first Roman imprisonment, Paul had plenty of liberty and expected to be released, Acts 28:30-31; Philippians 1:19, 25-26; 2:24. But in his second, about five years later, Paul's prison conditions were much worse and he expected to be executed by Nero, 2 Timothy 2:9; 4:6-8).

Even though Paul was eventually executed, Jesus went on to continue to do and teach (Acts 1:1) and the Church grew, eventually it converted the entire Roman Empire under Emperor Constantine...the mission was to reach the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) and the Lord did. Has Jesus' reign extended to your life? Has His Kingdom come to bear upon your life or are you struggling outside His Kingdom?

The Gospel in Acts included the goodnews about the Kingdom: the Gospel Jesus' disciples brought to the nations included the goodnews about the Kingdom (Acts 1:3, 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). But which King and Kingdom were they talking about? There was only one King and Kingdom promised in the Old Testament Scriptures: Messiah and His reign and Jesus was that long-awaited Messiah (Genesis 49:10—"Shiloh" can be a proper name or a possessive pronoun meaning "whose right it is" [cf. Ezekiel 21:26-27]; 2 Samuel 7:10-16; Psalm 2 [cf. Genesis 12:3, 7; Galatians 3:16]).

The prophet Isaiah lived during the latter half of Israel's kingdom period. He spoke God's message of judgment to the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem. Because of their rebellion, God would bring judgment on them through the nations Assyria and Babylon. But the book of Isaiah is not just about judgment; it's also about hope: God will one day send a future King from the line of David who will not only restore the nation of Israel but bring peace to the entire world (Isaiah 11:1-10). In fact, this King will save the entire human race from their sins and rebellion against God. That's why you find passages about Messiah throughout the book of Isaiah about His virgin birth (7:14), His deity and His everlasting Kingdom (9:6-7), about His Gospel of salvation and freedom for all who put their trust in Him (11:10; 42:1, 6; 52:7; 61:1-2, cf. Lk 4:18).

And in the New Testament as predicted by Isaiah, this King was born of a virgin and He was named Jesus (Luke 1-2). When Jesus began His ministry, He said to the people, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15). Goodnews for mankind was finally here, the King and His Kingdom had arrived. But this King was different than any other. His Kingdom would not be established by brutal force and power. This King would heal the nations and bring salvation to the people through His sacrificial death. When Jesus was crucified, they placed on Him a purple robe and a crown of thorns (Mark 15:17). They thought they were mocking a criminal who was about to die. They did not realize that they were crowning the King of kings and Lord of lords. Through His death, God made Jesus King of heaven and earth. At His name every knee will bow (Philippians 2:5-11).

But even though one day every knee will bow before Jesus, when He came the first time, He came to serve us, to free us from everything that is wrong with us. This is why you see Jesus in the Gospels healing and bringing people back to life. This is why we see Him take twelve nobodies and make them leaders of the Church. He took a brash fisherman named Peter, who thought he was tough and courageous but when the moment of crisis came he folded, this is why He took Peter and made him one of the founding leaders of the Church. Before Jesus' death, Peter fails Jesus miserably (Luke 22:54-62). After Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, Peter was a courageous leader who put his life on the line over and over for Jesus (Acts 2-5). This is why we see Jesus take a rabbi named Saul who terrorized Christians and turn him into the apostle Paul who suffered terribly for the lost of this world as his Lord did (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

This new life is not just for Peter and Paul or the countless others mentioned in Scripture, it's for you and me. What Jesus began to do in the Gospels, He continued to do in Acts (Acts 1:1) and He continues to do today in your life.

What did Jesus' enthronement effectively do...for you? The moment you believe in Jesus, God takes you out of Satan's kingdom of darkness and places you in the Kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13). This gives you a brand new life; it frees you from everything that is wrong in your life, including the strangle hold sin has on you (Luke 4:18; John 10:10; 17:20-26; Romans 6:1-11). We no longer have to live in death, instead, we can have life and peace (Romans 8:6; Hebrews 2:14-15).

But we notice that after we believe in Jesus, we still sin. Christians still sin! What's gone wrong? How do we grab a hold of the new life Jesus has given us? We need to walk with Him; we need to live life with Him every second. Everything we think, say, and do must be guided by Him. If we walk through this life with Him by our side, we will experience His peace and salvation (Galatians 5:16-26), even in the midst of suffering (James 1:2-5).

III. Conclusion

So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."