

The Book Of Acts: Verse-By-Verse

Acts 1:3-4

Study Notes

- **A Continuity Of Teaching:**

“After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” – Acts 1:3

“During those 40 days of various appearances what did Jesus teach about the Kingdom of God?”

Later groups such as the Gnostics claimed Jesus gave them “secret teachings”. The apostles make it clear that Jesus continued to teach the same elements of the kingdom of God that he had taught before his passion.

- **The Old Testament View Of Kingdom:**

The difference in Jesus’ post resurrection teaching was his ability to teach from a standpoint of what had already been accomplished; the provision of redemption through the Cross.

What forms Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God?

From the formation of Israel as a nation, it was clear that God was their only king. Exodus 15:18: “The LORD will reign for ever and ever.” Psalm 103:19: “The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.”

The Kingdom of God is the sphere of authority over which God exercises his control. In secondary terms, it is the sphere in which

humans acknowledge God's sovereignty.

During Israel's Old Testament period God's kingship was often displayed in his very specific relationship to Israel. Psalm 147:19-20 says, "He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws."

Israel eventually adopted a human monarchy, (beginning with Saul), but these leaders were still understood to be God's servants. Their rule was to be characterized by adherence to God's will. In effect, they still represented God's sovereignty among humans.

David's "Last Words" - 2 Samuel 23:2-3:

The God of Israel has spoken; the protector of Israel said to me: "The king who rules with justice, who rules in obedience to God, is like the sun shining on a cloudless dawn, the sun that makes the grass sparkle after rain."

- **The Collapse Of Israel's Monarchy:**

When Israel's monarchy eventually collapsed, the idea of the Kingdom of God largely reverted to the view of God's personal, individual sovereignty over humans. However, it took on a future tense:

Daniel 2:44: "At the time of those rulers the God of heaven will establish a kingdom that will never end. It will never be conquered but will completely destroy all those empires and then last forever."

Daniel 7:14-14: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

- **The Kingdom In The Gospels: The “Already” And Not Yet” Situation**

Using “Already”, but “Not Yet” language, Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as an immediate and future reality. Mark 1:14-15:

“It was after John’s arrest that Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God, saying, “The time has come at last—the kingdom of God has arrived. You must change your hearts and minds and believe the good news.”

Note Jesus’ words, “The Kingdom of God has arrived.” He is saying that with his Messiahship, God has begun introducing his “at once” and “final” rule over humans.

Repeatedly, Jesus makes it clear that this rule will be consummated at a future date. This is what Revelation 11:15 announces when it says, “The kingship of the world now belongs to our Lord and to his Christ, and he shall be king for timeless ages!”

- **The Continuity Of “Kingdom of God” Teaching:**

Given what we have seen, it is obvious what Luke means by, “He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”

Jesus was continuing to tell the apostles about the current and future tense of the Kingdom of God. All the apostles came to teach the same progressive outline of the Kingdom of God:

1. It had its initial introduction through Jesus’ public ministry.
2. It was further released through Jesus’ death and resurrection.
3. Its full scope will only be revealed at the consummation of the ages.

This is important for us to understand because this outline is imbedded in Luke’s history of the Early Church. From the earliest expansion of the Gospel to the last chapter of Paul’s ministry, this is the ongoing theme.

Matthew 24:14: "This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed to men all over the world as a witness to all the nations, and the end will come."

The emphasis upon the Kingdom of God became more pronounced with the death and resurrection of Christ: The Old Testament promises came into sharper focus.

- **An Overlooked Element:**

The apostles added to their teaching about the Kingdom of God an often-neglected element: A day was coming when God would judge the world – and finalize his solitary rule over history.

- Peter told Cornelius that Christ commanded the apostles "to preach to the people and testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead". – Acts 10:42.
- Paul told the crowd at Athens, "God has set a day on which he is going to judge the world in righteousness, by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has provided a pledge to all, by raising him from the dead". - Acts 17:31.

Throughout Acts and the Epistles the timing of this judgment is tied to Christ's Return. Example: Philippians 2:10-11:

"... That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The Kingdom of God, then, is displayed by the two comings of Christ. One manifestation was with Christ's incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection. The next manifestation will be with his Second Coming.

These comings, have an obvious time-gap between them. Currently, Christ's followers are living in an age we might call the "spiritual kingdom of God". In many ways, God's reign is found in spiritual

realities. The apostles, however, insist that the day is coming when the Kingdom of God will be physically present.

- **Two Conceptions Of The Kingdom Of God:**

1. The temporary age where believers belong to the spiritual kingdom and the age in which we will see the full display of God's rule. Example: Romans 8:18-19:

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed."

Because this overlap exists between the current manifestation of the Kingdom of God and the future manifestation. This is what Luke describes in Acts 1:4-8:

While he was eating with them he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but wait for what the Father had promised. "About this," he said, "you have heard me speak. For John indeed baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days' time."

When they had come together, then, they put this question to him: "Is this the time, Lord, when you are about to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

"It is not for you," he replied, "to learn about times or seasons which the Father has reserved under his own control. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

We will start looking at these instructions next time!