

Acts 8:40

We leave Philip in Caesarea and 20 years later we find him still evangelizing Caesarea.

Acts 21:8 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.

The Beginning of the Church

- Before we continue, I think it will our understanding of Acts to pinpoint when the Body of Christ was formed.
- There are four main theories:
 1. Embodied in God's people beginning with Abraham. (Covenant viewpoint, most prevalent)
 2. It began in Acts 2 at Pentecost. (Second most prevalent viewpoint)
 3. It began in Acts 28.
 4. It began mid-Acts. (Some believe Acts 9, others Acts 13)
- By pinpointing the beginning of the Church, the Body of Christ, it will be easier to understand the rest of our study of Acts.
- Although there is much diversity as to when the present Church began, there is (in general) harmony as to how to become a member of this Church. We may disagree with each other on certain theological doctrines but we need to treat them as brothers.

Covenant Theology

- In general believes in replacement theology. Today's church has replaced Israel, what Israel was promised physically has been given to the Church spiritually.
- Most believe there will be no literal Millennial Kingdom. The references to the Kingdom are to be fulfilled to the Church spiritually.
 - This in spite of many literal references. (**Matthew 19:28; Isaiah 2**)
 - Here we have a literal reference and a future prophesy in one passage. (**Isaiah 9:6—7**)
 - Strangely enough, the covenant viewpoint would interpret the first part as having happened literally and the second part will be fulfilled spiritually.
- The biggest problem with spiritualizing the Bible is that it can be made to say anything you want it to say. There is no way to accurately spiritualize Scripture unless Scripture spiritualizes itself.

Acts 2 Beginning

- Hopefully we have shown that early Acts is a continuation of the Kingdom program that began in the Gospels, it is not the beginning of a new program.
- Everything that was happening was a part of prophesy. The Body of Christ is not related to prophesy, but Mystery. (**Acts 2:16—18 Ephesians 3:8—9**)
- Everything related to Israel. Gentiles come in over 10 years after Pentecost, after Paul was saved.

Acts 28 Beginning

- Those who believe this look to Acts 28:28 as the turning point:
 - "Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."
 - The KJV says that this salvation of God IS sent to the Gentiles giving it the idea that is was at that moment onward that Paul is going to the Gentiles. The NASB and NIV translate it correctly by giving the proper tense to the verb.
- Before this point in time they believe Paul preached the Kingdom gospel to the Jew only.
- They would also have to believe the following:

1. Paul did not receive the revelation of the Mystery during his early ministry
 2. Paul's ministry among the Gentiles began after the close of the Acts period
 3. The early epistles of Paul are not for us today (Rom., I & II Cor., Gal. and I & II Thes.)
 4. A two-Body theory, an extra Body between Acts 2 and Acts 28.
 5. The Rapture taught in I Thessalonians 4 is not our hope.
 6. The Lord's Supper is not to be observed.
- Reasons the Church could not have started at Acts 28:
 1. Paul declares that Israel had fallen in Romans 11 written 4—5 years before Acts 28.
 2. The Mystery is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:6—7 was written 6—7 years before Acts 28.
 3. The Mystery is mentioned in Romans 16:25 which was written 4—5 years before Acts 28.
 4. Paul was in prison for preaching the Mystery in Ephesians 6:19—20. Acts 28 was written while he was in prison for this preaching. He was preaching the Mystery before Acts 28.

Mid-Acts Beginning

- We are left with the mid-Acts position for the beginning of the Church.
- Supporters of an Acts 9 beginning include Stam and Sadler.
- Supporters of an Acts 13 beginning include Baker and O'Hare.
- The line between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of the Grace of God is found at the fall of Israel. If we can identify when Israel fell, we can identify the boundary between dispensations.
- All mid-Acts adherents believe the church started before Paul wrote his first epistle (1 Thessalonians around 51 A.D.). They also believe this new dispensation was a Mystery hid from ages past and revealed only through Paul by Jesus Christ.

Acts 13 Beginning

- Paul began preaching the Gospel of the Grace of God with his first missionary journey more than 10 years after he was saved.
- Paul was saved under the Kingdom program because he was told to rise and be baptized and wash away your sins in Acts 22:16
- Cornelius was saved some five years after Paul was saved. This was the first mention of a Gentile being saved (Kingdom) and seems to represent Gentile salvation in the Millennial kingdom.

Acts 9 Beginning

- The beginning of the church is hardly noticeable because Acts is giving a record of Israel's fall and casting away, not the rise of the Body of Christ.
- We don't learn about the formation of the Body of Christ in Acts. That is what Paul writes about in his Epistles. The formation of the Church, the Body of Christ is downplayed in Acts.
- Paul received his commission on the road to Damascus, not 10 years later. **Acts 26:16**
- God was already putting Israel aside when he saved Paul. We see evidence of this in listing Israel last in the list of to whom Paul was to go. **Acts 9:15**
- Another subtle change is the term "sons of Israel". Instead of going to the nation Israel, Paul would be bearing the name of Christ to individuals in Israel.
- Another subtle but significant change is that after Paul was saved he received the Holy Spirit. It was then that Ananias said he needed to be baptized.
 - This is the first time someone received the Holy Spirit before baptism.
 - Ananias baptized Paul because that's what needed to be done. He was... a man who was devout by the standard of the Law (Acts 22:12). and knew that's what he needed to do.
 - There was no understanding yet that baptism was no longer needed but evidence that is was starting to fade away.

Originally taught at Bethesda Sunday School February 8, 2009