

How God Is Using Apostolic Ministry to Fulfill This Biblical Prophecy About Israel

The book of Acts describes the start of the activities of the original apostolic community. All of us today are continuing in their footsteps. If we want to make sure we are doing the right thing and going in the right direction, it is good to go back to our origins. How did the early apostles start and what were their goals?

Believers in Yeshua today, in every country and ethnic group, are called to serve and finish what the original apostolic community started. We have the same great commission today.

Reviewing Acts One

Yeshua has risen from the dead. He appears alive physically to His disciples during a 40-day period, following the Passover and leading up to the day of Pentecost. This was an infallible proof of the resurrection and an opportunity for Yeshua to give them clear instructions for the years to come (Acts 1:1-11).

The main theme of His instructions was “the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). In order to receive power to carry out these instructions, He tells them they must soon “be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5, ESV). The baptism in the Holy Spirit was an empowerment to carry out His instructions concerning the kingdom of God.

Then the disciples ask Yeshua what was to them a very relevant and logical question: “Will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6,). This question has never fully

been answered. It is still pertinent to us today and is the primary issue of this article.

Looking from the Disciples' Viewpoint

Yeshua is the long-awaited Messiah, son of David, the ordained king of Israel and king of the greater kingdom of God. He has dealt with the core problem of the sin of the human race by dying on the cross as a substitute punishment. He has risen from the dead, thus providing eternal life and a solution for death.

From all that Yeshua had taught them, before the cross and in the 40 days after the resurrection, it seemed obvious to the disciples that the next step would be to establish the kingdom in Israel, and then to extend that kingdom to all the world. In this thought, they were partly correct and partly incorrect.

In the overall teaching of the Bible that was available to them at that time (the Hebrew Scriptures of the Law and the Prophets), the establishment of the kingdom to Israel was one of the most central themes. Establishing the kingdom in Israel and then extending it to the rest of the world seemed totally logical and totally scriptural.

The kingdom in Israel and the nations was a central theme, not only of the Old Covenant, but also of the Gospel teachings (Matt.1:1, 4:17, 6:10, 8:11, 10:6-7). Yeshua's disciples who had lived with Him and listened to Him for several years could have thought of no other plan.

First Things First

At the time of the infilling of the Holy Spirit, however, Yeshua informs them of a significant innovation in the strategy to establish the kingdom of God on earth. He tells His disciples that they are not to know when He will establish the kingdom of God to Israel (Acts 1:7), because something has

to happen first. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, MEV; see Isa. 49:6).

Yeshua's statement here is not a change in the essential values of the kingdom, but in the strategy to bring it about. When the disciples received the Holy Spirit, they received all the spiritual essence of the kingdom of God inside themselves (Rom. 14:17). To that extent, they did establish the kingdom of God in Israel when they were filled with fire on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-5).

They received the inward essence of Yeshua's kingdom, but not the outward expression of His government. The spirit of the messianic kingdom was to be established in Israel and the nations through the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel message. This is in accordance with Yeshua's kingdom parables in which the kingdom comes first inwardly and then outwardly (Matt. 13, Mark 4, Luke 17).

The fire of the Holy Spirit is the fuel; the gospel message the ammunition; the kingdom of God is the target. We don't want to have the power and miss the goal. We don't want to strive for the goal without the power.

Watch for Part 2 next week. {eo}

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