

Building a Community that Stands - a study in the Book of Acts, Dr Jason Clark

Jason began by asking: Have we sensed a fresh unleashing of the demonic in recent weeks? Eph 2v2; Eph 6v12. Two “stories” - the religious which includes God in history, ie “porous”; and the secular which is “buffered” (“I let God in when I need to”). Both are being broken down. Current polarisation (politics, binary solutions, etc.) are not going away but Jesus promised he’d be with us and not leave us as orphans. He promised a different way of life. (Matt 5v38-48). Christ is risen, he is with us.

Suggestion: Spend a few minutes praying for Israel/Gaza, Ukraine/Russia or another challenging situation.

Your Personal Pentecost: Revival for a New Kind of Society. Acts 10v28, 34-36, 44-47

Holy Spirit’s job description is that he is obsessed with us. Some key verses from Jesus’ farewell discourse: John 14v15-18, 25-31a; 15v 26-27; 16v15, 19b, 22-24

Acts 2 we see Father, Son and Holy Spirit all acting with and for each other. Spirit brings Jesus to us

Acts 10. “Church” only exists between Ascension and Parousia (Christ’s return). During this period the Spirit retells, reincarnates the risen Christ. Here the Spirit brings Jesus to both Jews and Gentiles. How?

1. Recalling (anamnesis)

In both Acts 2 and 10 we see Peter preaching about Jesus. He recalls the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. At Communion we recall what we’ve forgotten and need to know. As Christians it is good to gather often and recall the stories of Jesus in our lives. Don’t follow the lie of “mind your own business, I want to get back to how it was.”

Recall incidents when Jesus did something significant - ask 2 or 3 to share

2. Recapitulation

Satan is defeated. Jesus is incarnate in us. Irenaeus (Greek bishop AD130-202) declared that Jesus is 100% human and 100% divine so could defeat death. We can experience his risen power. But what atmosphere do we carry? Music can set the scene in a film (think of the 2 notes that depict Jaws). What do we recapitulate? Key verses to consider: Rom 16v20 Satan crushed; Rom 5v1-5 peace with God; 1Cor 15v22 made alive in Christ; Heb 2 Jesus shares our humanity and is our high priest.

What “atmosphere” do we carry? How can we be “the aroma of Christ” (2Cor v2v15)

3. Receive (paradosis) his story

1 Cor 11v23-26 (institution of communion) “paradosis” literally means receive/give away. So Paul “handed on what was handed on.” Laying on of hands is paradosis. We are to hand on to others what we have received - this can include words of knowledge or prophecy.

Why are we reticent to hand on what’s been handed to us?

4. Remembering (epiclesis)

Lk 22v19-20 at Communion we remember Jesus - we call on Holy Spirit to bring Christ to us. “Re-member” is the opposite of “dismember.” At communion we remember the bread and wine and ask to be cut off from all roots of hurt, etc and be re-grafted, re-membered. Christ consumes us and shows his life through us. In therapy, Jason said “I’m trying to become someone else” - Gal 2v20.

How do we “dis-member” others? What do we need to do to join the breaks?

5. Revival / Renewal

Acts 2 the Holy Spirit came as wind and fire. Acts 10 the Holy Spirit came with tongues. We are to give up being porous to or buffeted by the world. God wants us to be displaced to the eschaton (end of the world). We are to step between this world and the next. We have something to live for, to die for, every day of our lives. Acts 10 had 2 groups (Jews and Gentiles) who should not have been in same room. Jesus came to both and the Kingdom adventure began.

Do we feel we have “something to live for, to die for”? Of not, why not?

Pray for one another: maybe use the words of the Lord’s prayer which emphasises the coming of the Kingdom, or use the words “Come Holy Spirit” over one another.