

- a) Too often we want to convince the world that the church is a lot like them, so it's not so bad.
- b) *The world needs for the church to be the church.* Then they may think we are weird, but they will also know that we are a taste of heaven on earth!

## The Miracle We call "Church"

Jerry Cisar — January 6, 2019

Text: Acts 1:1-9; 2:1-13, 41-47; 4:32-34a

### Introduction: It takes a miracle to birth a church!

"I could not have thought the church up. I could not have *imagined* church."<sup>1</sup>

#### LIVE THE STORY

*The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community.*

*The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- What do you think Hauerwas's late pastor meant by: "I could not have thought the church up. I could not have *imagined* church."
- Do you think it takes a miracle for what the Bible describes as the church to come into being? Explain.
- Why is it important for us to remember that the church is something only God can create?
- What do earthly kingdoms (nations) do, and how does Christ's kingdom turn that model on its head?
- How did God insure division at Babel? How does He create unity at Pentecost?
- How do Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-34a demonstrate that the church is God's means for accomplishing the impossible? What is required of the church to become that miracle that accomplishes the impossible?

### I. A New Nation that Functions a New Way (Acts 1:1-9)

- A. The Kingdom of God... the Nation of God.
  - i. Church and state; religion and politics
  - ii. Nations define us as people.
  - iii. Nations unite and divide.
- B. The disciples are interested in "*when*" the nation of God will come, but Jesus tells them they need to focus on **how**.
  - i. Waiting for the gift of the promised Spirit is essentially the same as waiting for the restoration of the Kingdom of God.
  - ii. Jesus doesn't dismiss their question but adjusts their thinking about the Kingdom.
    - a) The rest of *Acts* answers their question (and ours).

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir*.

- b) If one were restoring the Kingdom to Israel, where would they start?
- First, \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Then, the \_\_\_\_\_ boundaries of the nation: Judea and all Samaria.
  - But then something \_\_\_\_\_: *the elimination of boundaries!*

C. Jesus is starting a new nation that functions in a new way, and one of the key new ways is that all its boundaries are blown out and the world is his nation.

## II. The Reversal of Babel and its Consequent Divisions (Acts 2:1-13)

- A. Babel was the beginning of nations.
- i. It was humankind's best attempt at a unified kingdom.
    - a) It was *possible*, but not good.
    - b) Differences divide us.
  - ii. Pentecost reverses Babel.
- B. The rushing mighty wind is reminiscent of that wind of God that was hovering over the chaos in the original creation.
- i. The sun will be darkened; the moon will not give its light.
  - ii. It is the end of the old and the start of the new. (2 Cor. 5:17)

- C. Christ unites people from every different place (whether geographically or economically).
- i. The miracle that we call the church, is a miracle because it is the transformation of relationships.
  - ii. The church is the means for the miracle of uniting people from every nation, tribe, language, and people (Rev. 7:9) into one nation, one people, one community.

## III. God's means to accomplish the impossible (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-34a)

- A. What is meant in saying the miracle of the church is God's means to accomplish the impossible?
- i. "The poor you will always have with you." (Matt. 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8)
  - ii. But in the miraculous church birthed at Pentecost there are no needy persons among them!
    - a) Deuteronomy 15:4-5
    - b) Deut. 15:7-11
  - iii. God accomplished the impossible—a taste of heaven on earth. There were no needy persons among them!
- B. This is a picture of the church—and what God intends for it to be. It is *not* what we could have thought up. But it is what God imagined... and created!
- i. It takes a miracle...
  - ii. It takes a miracle...

*This miraculous new nation that brings an end to human divisions and stratification is what both churches represented here today must seek and find. It is what the world needs.*