**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Resurrection Series**

Acts of the Holy Spirit

A Transitional Time

June 9nd, In the Year of Our Lord 2024

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(All Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

Sermon Audio: roundtopchurch.org / Under Member’s tab

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 It is a natural question for anyone to ask about how Christianity got started. We live in a pluralistic religious society with many diverse messages to choose. The name “Christian” is obviously from Jesus Christ. . . with the Greek name “Christ” used for the Hebrew “Messiah”. We made the historical point last week that the Romans considered the new “Way” movement to be an offshoot of Judaism. In a way. . . the Romans were not wrong. How so? God designated the decedents for Abraham (Father of the Hebrews/Jews) to be a testimony and witness of the Promise (Gen. 12:3) to the world. The Promise is to surrender to God by faith (Gen. 15:6) and become in right-standing with Him. Paul and James both repeated this Promise in Romans 4:9,22; Gal. 3:6; and James 2:23. This Promise (Gen.12:3 and 17) was given by God before the Law was given to Moses (Deut. 5:22). In fact, predating Abraham, the son of Adam; Abel was approved by God due to his faith (Hebrews 11:1-4).

 The apostle Paul informs us. . .19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. (Gal. 3:19)

 From these Scriptures, we can see why someone might think that Christianity spawned from Judaism. Not that the Romans knew Hebrew Scripture, but they knew that Jesus was a Jew and whatever He taught was viewed as part of Judaism from their perspective. However, we can see that God’s plan, from the beginning, was/is to justify all people to Him by their surrendering faith as Abel was approved by God through his faith. God chose the Hebrews to be THE WITNESS to the world about His Promise. This Promise started with Abraham (Gen. 3)

 Specifically for the Hebrews, God tied their relationship with Him to land. . . hence the Promised Land (Gen. 12:1, 17:7ff) . . . where the promised Messiah would be born. Paul a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, was set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, (Rom. 1:1-3).

 On Joseph’s deathbed, he said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob" (Gen. 50:24).

 This promised covenant was/is always predicated on “I will be your God and you will be My People” (Ex. 6:7, Lev. 26:12) and tied to a warning of punishment and destruction if God’s ways were not followed (Lev.26:14-46).

 So, we see that Jesus’ Incarnation mission to the Cross was part of God’s plan from the time of the Fall of Adam and Eve when God said, “He shall bruise you on the head” (Gen. 15:3). Paul reiterated this crushing of Satan (Rom. 16:20).

 So, the Old Covenant specifically addresses the Law Moses was given over 500 years after God made a covenant of faith with Abraham. This Old Covenant, as it is called, was added due to the transgressions of the people, and its sole mission was to show the error of their ways and that they could never, by their own merit, earn a right-standing with God, that is salvation. Paul sums up this teaching by saying “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

To address this need, Christians need to know that God spoke through His prophet Jeremiah in about 600 B.C. (a Hebrew) that there would one day be a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

 34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

God’s writer (not named) for the New Testament book of Hebrews cites the same Jeremiah passage (Hebrews 8:8-9).

8 For finding fault with them, He says,

 "BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH;

 9 NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

 10 "FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

 11 "AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

 12 "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."

 13 When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

 Jesus points to His blood as the sign of the New Covenant in Luke 22:20.

 And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

 The apostle Paul writes to the Believer’s in Corinth and quotes Jesus’ same words. Christians who take the Lord’s Supper know these words.

**Corinthians 11:25-26** 25 In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

 In addition, in Paul’s letter called 2 Corinthians, he writes about a “new covenant” that saves as opposed to the letter of the Law that only condemns (kills).

**2 Corinthians 3:6** who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The Law had no mechanism to forgive sin, as we read in Hebrews 10. And in Hebrews 12:24 we read. . . and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.

 Many Christians may find it hard to explain why there had to be a New Covenant. The answer is simple. . . the Old Covenant was never intended to take care of the problem of sin (Hebrews 10) but only highlighted the need for a Savior (Messiah). The prophesied suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53) is Jesus. In addition to Isaiah 53, the “suffering” designation is seen in Psalm 22.

 12 Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled me.

 13 They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion.

 14 I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me.

 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death.

 16 For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet.

 17 I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me;

 18 They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.

Isaiah 53

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

 **Now that we have substantiated the need for a New Covenant. . .** let’s turn our attention to focus on Acts 1 and the New Way. So, we continue our Resurrection sermon series with a focus on the apostle’s lives after the Ascension. God’s writer, Luke, tell us in Acts 1 that Jesus presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. In addition, Jesus gathered the apostles together and commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, which Jesus had said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

 But the apostles were still not wanting to accept or fully understand Jesus’ mission. So, they were asking Him, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:3-8)

**The Ascension**

9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.

 11 They also said,

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

**Return to Jerusalem**

**Upper Room Wait**

 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

Note: A Jew was permitted to travel 2,000 cubits on the Sabbath (Exodus 16: 29, Numbers 35: 5), about 1.2 km. (¾ mile), and the Mount of Olives was within this distance from Jerusalem

 13 When they had entered *the city*, they went up to the **upper room** where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. [11 men]

14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

**Peter’s First Address After Jesus Ascended**

**Replace Judas**

 15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty [120] persons was there together), and said,

16 "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 "For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry."

18 (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. 19 And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms, [109:8] 'LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE DWELL IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE.'

21 "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us--

22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us-- one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection."

23 So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.

 24 And they prayed and said,

"You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen 25 to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:9-26)

 In the **first chapter of Acts**, Luke accurately records foundational historical events in God’s witness of His New Covenant, called The Way. Remember, Luke writes before 70 A.D. (within 30 years from the Cross). Scholars know this because He does not mention the destruction of Jerusalem (which Jesus prophesied would happen) or the martyred deaths of Paul, Peter (by 68 A.D.) and James (Jesus’ brother) about 62 A.D. Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 1:24 are proof that Luke was with Paul for extended periods of time, and it is assumed that he learned the history of The Way through Paul and other eyewitnesses. Remember, Paul met the Risen Jesus independently (Acts 9) and verified his witness with Peter and James (Galatians 1:18-19). We read in Galatians 2:11-14 that Paul disagreed with Peter because he refrained from eating with Gentiles because they were not circumcised Jews. From the biblical texts, there is not a great witness that Paul and Peter spent much time together. However, we read in Acts 15 that Paul and Peter witnessed their testimony to the Gentiles. This was a transitional time when James and others thought that Gentiles had to adhere to the Law of Moses (circumcision) first and then become followers of Jesus. However, at the Jerusalem conference, (Acts 15) both Paul and Peter witnessed God’s reaching out His Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. As a result, James, the leader of the congregation in Jerusalem pronounced, "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. (Acts 15:19-20).

**Outline – Acts 1**

1:1-2: Refers to the Gospel he wrote spanning Jesus’ life to the orders Jesus gave the

 apostles and the Ascension.

1:3 Recaps verification of Jesus’ 40-day teaching in the resurrection appearances.

1:4 Jesus commands apostles to wait in Jerusalem for what the Father promised.

1:5 Jesus promised baptism of Holy Spirit.

1:6 Disciples confused about Jesus’ not intending to restore Israel’s kingdom.

1:7 Jesus directs disciples to the Father’s authority to choose times of restoration.

1:8 Jesus refocuses disciples to be empowered by God’s Holy Spirit witness.

1:9 The Ascension

1:10-11 It is assumed angels tell disciples - Jesus will return the same way, bodily.

1:12 Luke confirms location of Ascension to be Mount Olive.

1:13 Return to Jerusalem, the upper room, and eleven disciples named.

1:14 Emphasized prayer. Presence of women, Jesus’ mother and brothers.

1:15-26 Peter’s sermon focuses on replacing Judas.

 We learn many things from Luke’s historical narrative. Ask yourself the question – What would the followers of the Messianic leader do after He was crucified, and after they had witnessed His forty-day Resurrection presence? Obviously, the Resurrection, was, as they say, the “game changer”. Think about it. . . if the resurrected Messiah told you to wait for the empowerment of the same Spirit-power that resurrected Him from death. . . would you wait? Well. . . if you were in this far, you would most likely wait.

 Acts 1 is full of miraculous events that cannot be accounted for with human knowledge: The Resurrection and Resurrection teachings from a bodily Jesus, the Ascension, and the Holy Spirit empowerment from God to people. God empowers people to do things they could not do on their own.

 Acts 1 also highlights that after all had happened the disciples were still holding on to their Jewish hope of a restored Israel (v.6-7). But God chose to stay with them. . . just like God decides to stay with us when we still hold on to things of this world. The response Jesus gives, to this question from the disciples, shows God’s great love continually chooses to work through Believers who daily struggle with the heavy influences of this fallen world.

For I am confident of this very thing,

that He who began a good work in you

will perfect it

until the day of Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 1:6)

AMEN