

"The Book of Acts"

Dallas Willard - 2 Sessions @ Renovare [2:33:18]



Scribe's Comments - The session was transcribed from the recording in good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The **bold** and underline are the scribe's emphasis.

~ ~ ~ Session 1

[1:13:59]



"The Book of Acts" (audio)

To deal with Acts in two hours is like being invited to eat a horse for lunch.

The book of Acts is normally not appreciated for what it really is.

Can we understand Acts in terms of contemporary church life or only by placing it in the context of God's march through human history?

The answer is the latter.

Book of Acts in a much larger context than we do today - often a feed into what we know about churches in our world today and recently, you can't appreciate what it does and it will block understanding of the the Kingdom of God is doing today.

Matthew 16 - *"I will build my church and death will not overcome it."*

It is an eternal work God is doing in history and what He gets out of it is a redeemed community. We messed it up but He didn't give up.

God's re-involvement in history.

If we want to get this right, we have to start in Genesis 1:26. [5:00]

26 Then God said, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule..."*

That is the image of God - to rule, to have dominion.

That is not the top of the human food chain.

The rule of the human being is always meant to be under the rule of God.

Jesus, "Repent, the Kingdom of God is here."

* Turn, for the dining room is at hand. It's there and has been there.

Turn, for the rule of God is available to you. You can live there.

Seek first the Kingdom of God is a companion. If we don't seek it, we will wind up living on our own. The result is the disasters we see.

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The Kingdom of God - "God in action."

[9:30]

His kingdom is present where He wants done is done.

Don't think about that obstructively. It's right here, right now.

"In Him, we live and move and have our being."

* Move you hand. You did that in God.

Praying "thy kingdom come" is where he wants done is not done.

* Ezekiel - "Wheels of Fire"

I can't do much with Wheels of Fire but if you are dealing with people far from God, you may need this.

The book of Acts where God had revealed Himself to the world through His son. His closest friends did not know what was happening.

John 14

Thomas - We don't know where you are going.

Jesus - I am the way. Know me, know the Father.

Phillip - Show us the Father.

The presence of Jesus and the death and resurrection open the door to the book of Acts. That's what Jesus very carefully prepared them for. The book of Acts opens with Him continuing to work with them. They were still fumbling trying to get their minds wrapped around what was happening. He's talking to them about the Kingdom of God.

The gospel that brings discipleship, transformation and then power is the gospel of the Kingdom of God. What is the gospel of the K of G? It is available to anyone who will simply rely on Jesus, put their confidence in Him. Putting your trust in what he said and what He did you begin to experience the kingdom of God.

New birth - John 3.

Nicodemus came claiming to see the action of God in Jesus.

"Only do what you do unless God is with you."

He was right but he didn't know what he was saying. The kingdom comes in an invisible, personal power.

K of G is ungodly, personal power. You can't see it.

A major part that has had to develop through the centuries is an understanding of God as a spiritual reality, interacting with us, wanting to inhabit us and bringing us to the power and character He intended us to have living in His image. We would exercise dominion in unions with God. The way we know God is with us is by his action with us. We know God was with us through the rear-view mirror.

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The prophet, *"Oh that God would rend the heavens and come down."*

He did it in a manger and humble people who act in reliance upon Him.

Generally we look back and say, "Ebenezer, hitherto, the Lord has led us."

All of that had to be worked out. Refer to the Renovare Study Bible - God's action in history calling out a people came to be more present. As time goes by it's almost seems as if God is working out a plan on how he might come back into human life without destroying it. God is so great He has to hide Himself in order that we can have a life.

"You are a God who hides yourself." Isaiah 54

That's a part of the story to allow human beings to step into a life that is greater than they can imagine without destroying themselves.

The Blessing of Abraham

[20:00]

What is the blessing of Abraham?

God is with him in everything he does!

Turns up again in Galatians 3:14 - The blessing of Abraham would come upon those who have learned to put their faith in Him. That's what comes to us. That we would be able to fulfill our calling to reign in life.

Romans 5:17 - *"For if, by the transgression of one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ."*

That's now through the "abundance of grace".

Grace - (def.) "God acting in your life."

Grace and the Kingdom come together. Grace is God acting in our lives to accomplish what we can not accomplish on our own. When you get that understanding of grace and then you read the teachings in the Old & New Testament about grace, you'll see it is the restoring of rule. It is God's way of helping us realize what we were called to in our creation. That is creative responsibility for our world.

* For example - [Our] house is a manifestation of our life...our [work] is.

Grace goes far beyond anything that is typically thought of as religious.

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—> That thought is one of the main thoughts that I have to hang everything I have to say because the book of Acts is the story of how God's kingdom and grace manifested itself far beyond religious organization because in that story religious organization drops away.

The History of the Old Testament

[24:05]

* **Exodus** - Abraham's descendants were not a nation. In the Exodus, they became a people. God manifested himself in the Exodus independent of and contrast to religious organization.

God in the bush before Moses. *"You want me to what?"*

"Who am I going to tell them sent me?"

"Tell the, 'I am that I am' sent me." "Oh..."

That's a common theme when God calls people.

* **Jeremiah** - *"I'm just a kid."*

God desires and is establishing a world of His kingdom that does not run from human power. That's what we are learning especially when we get to the book of Acts.

* **Book of Judges** - One of the places you see most vividly of what God had in mind is the book of Judges. There is no human organization in Judges. God's interaction was through individuals whom He called. God was working out a pattern of human government that was from God not from man.

* **Samuel** - They get tired of judges. They want a government.

God says, *"They have not rejected you, they have rejected me."*

One of the more profound passages in the Bible when we think so much about government.

"I give you a King in my anger and I took him away in my wrath."

Hosea 13:11

He gives them a king who are used to thrash them. You have a few good ones but there was not a king in the history of Israel that did not fail bitterly at some point. That's the way it is if you go that route. If you have human government it is some kind of stop gap measure and the plan is to abolish it.

* **Daniel 2** - The stone cut without hands is a divine government and it is designed to eliminate human government. That has grave implications for what we do in religion.

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* **Exile**

[30:10]

The human government the Jews had come to trust is crushed in the Exile. The exile is a progression in God's plan that picks up in the book of Acts and the book of Acts is not done yet. We are still living there. It will come out to a good solution in the future and we get to be a part of it. Human government in its nature is designed to fail because it trusts the wrong thing.

* **Malachi 4:4** - A manifestation of the old effort at the kingdom of God among the Jewish people. *"Remember the law from my servant Moses...the prophet will restore the hearts of the Father to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers."*

The manifestation of the failure is in **the family**. The old law could not redo the heart. The primary manifestation of it was the failure of fathers & sons to relate to one another as was intended. This is such a revelation of human reality.

Commandment - *"Honor your Father & Mother."* Can't do it if your'e relying on human abilities. Same with **Marriage** - *Three to Get Married* by Fulton Sheen. You have to have God involved.

* Inter-Testamental - A rich form of Jewish life formed. It was a failure because it attempted to organized Jewish life through the synagogue with government organized around religion. That form prevails when John the Baptist comes. Everyone was thinking of the Kingdom of God coming in the form of human kingdom, mainly the religious authorities. What had come to be know as the "Law & the Prophets" was not the Law & the Prophets at all. It was the arrangement of human power that crushed the people where the people in power allowed it to exalt themselves. Jesus is constantly fighting that battle.

The New Testament

Matthew 21 - Jesus is teaching *"the ones in power rejected the stone that alone could be the cornerstone."*

Jesus is announcing a tremendous shift.

v. 43 - *"Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."*

The book of Acts is an account of how that happened.

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It begins with post-resurrection teaching and winds up with Paul teaching in Rome with no human power whatsoever. Preaching the gospel as a prisoner. It's important to get the point of that change.

The Book of Acts

Acts 1 - People still asking for a kingdom based on human organization.

v. 2 - *"By the Holy Spirit he had given orders by the apostles."* He was teaching them without being visibly present. That's where He had to bring His people. The effects of the words that came through the Holy Spirit was something they could identify.

* The Disciples on the road to Emmaus - *"Did not our hearts burn within us as He spoke to us along the way?"* Now He's teaching them how to respond through the Holy Spirit to what He's teaching them because...

He is going to form a powerful organization for world redemption that could not be based on anything that could be identified as a human organization.

This is a big point for what is happening in the book of Acts and what is to happen today. The constant tendency is to try to find a human organization and give powers to people in that organization with hopes it will work for God's glory.

v. 4 - *"...wait for what the Father promised. You will be baptized in the Holy Spirit..."*

People tend to think in terms of what was manifested in the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts is not about baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many say, "What we need is to get into the Upper Room to pray" but that will not solve our problems. It was a time for initiation as an order under God that people had to have a way for recognizing. The baptism of the Holy Spirit will always manifest where someone needs to recognize the presence of God where they had not previously recognized it. Look at the reorganization of God's people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

v. 6 - *"Is it at this time that you are going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?"* Their idea of restoration of the kingdom was taking governmental power. That had thought that way for centuries.

In the gospels, Jesus is reconstructing that understanding.

"What is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They replied, *"David's."* **Matthew 22:42**

Not the Son of David as they understand. No Jewish Father is going to call their son Lord. He is teaching them to try to help them past the idea that the Messiah is going to come in the form of a governmental leader.

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v. 8 - *"You shall receive power"* ...without position. They wanted position. They understood that power flowed from position They could not understand how they could return to Genesis 1:26 without positional power.

That comes up over and over where power is associated with position. Prophetic ministry always came from power without position.

"Who sent you?" "Where did you get this authority?"

They were asking for position. Jesus was careful to arrange that with His association with John the Baptist but He was never a student of John the Baptist. [John] was recognized as a prophet and someone who endorsed Jesus. But John the Baptist did not have human authority.

"Was John's authority from heaven or of man?" **Matthew 21:25**

Is there a heavenly authority that organizes human life so that it can actually be conducted in a manner intended by God where the law of God flows from a life that is transformed by God? [46:20]

That is what the Old Testament did not succeed in doing largely because it degenerated into human arrangement that served human purposes and always found prophets in opposition.

Prophets - position of opposition. They normally get killed.

Jesus, *"A prophet does not perish outside of Jerusalem."* **Luke 13:33**

The human system of domination is where you go to get killed if you are a prophet. That will be because that human system always tries to work in human power and because of that can never come into accord with God's kingdom. Never. You can only come into accord with God's kingdom by God's power and for that you had to be subordinated from the inside out.

They knew that. The greatest law? Jesus goes right to the inside, *"Love God with all your..."* That's a different location. You don't have to go to church to do that. That's your life.

What is it to love God? To have your will set to accomplish what is good in God's eyes. Love is always oriented toward what is good. Love is care. To love God with your all heart, mind, soul and strength is to have all the primary dimensions of your directed to what is good.

Psalms 19 - *"Law of the Lord is perfect restoring the soul."*

Joshua 1:8 - *"This book of the Law not depart from your mouth..."*

One of the great tragedies of our time:

"You can't be justified by the law so we don't need it."

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The primary way you seek the Kingdom of God is through the law of God. [49:45]

When you seek it there you find grace. Grace does not come apart from law and law is not effective apart from grace. You find someone truthful through and through, that's grace. They can't do that on their own.

* Girl in Sunday School - "What is a lie?"

"It is an abomination to God and a very present help in times of trouble."

If your going to be truthful, you're going to need some help.

All of the Law is like that. The law came in the Old Testament to the people who really understood that but it could not be made the basis of their life together. The life of the Jewish people together degenerated into all kinds of things other than truthfulness and love and over and over again until you see it being enriched in the later prophets in keeping the law like making sure you keep care of widows & orphans. That's always the mark. Why? That's where love is. You don't do that just for points you do that because you love widows & orphans because God loves widows & orphans.

You had to turn to the inside. By the time you get to Jesus, the lawyer asking the question knows what the answer is. Jesus says, *"You're not far from the kingdom of God."* **Mark 12:34** The lawyer knew the answer but they could not make it happen. They constantly fell back into legalism, pharisaism, self-righteousness.

"You shall receive power" - it is a power that comes from God. It is not mediated through human beings. That shift is the primary shift in the book of Acts. [52:45]

What you see now is God taking a people that has been prepared and reaching out to the whole world in transformation.

v. 7-8 *"...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the Earth."*

That had been the intention of the Jewish people all along.

Jeremiah 49:6 - *"It is too small a thing that you should be my servant...I will make you a light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."*

Have that in mind when you reach Acts 1. Not identifiable in terms of cultural religion. What he is talking about is **World Revolution**.

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Matthew 28:18-20

[55:40]

"All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me..."

It is not just Jewish things or Christian things, it is everything.

Designing a house, writing a play, running a bank.

Jesus is the best in your field. He can do everything better than you.

We're talking **World Revolution**.

"As you go, make Baptists, Quakers, Catholics, Protestants, Christians"

He said make Disciples of Him.

If we miss that turn, we have to consult our GPS - "recalculating"

"As you go, make disciples..."

When you have disciples, bring them together in Trinitarian fellowship. The name is the reality. It is not something you use when you say it. That's not what is being spoken of here. It is talking about immersion in Trinitarian fellowship. John 17 - Fellowship with the Father to the fellowship that the disciples are intended to have with one another. If you got there, you can...

"Teach them to do all that I commanded."

Not they ought to, but they can.

"I am with you until the end of the age" - the point when it's all done.

God has accomplished His purposes in human history and He has the community He intended from the beginning.

That section is about **World Revolution**...wherever you live. It invites you to think, suppose that would happen there. This is not about the church. The Church, appropriately understood in New Testament terms, is about discipleship. They make disciples. Disciples are for the benefit of the world not for the church.

This is quite a church. **When you think about the book of Acts you have to think about it by placing it in God's march through human history.**

The church today has a place in this. The best people are in the church. The church is the primary place for making disciples.

"World Revolution" is what the Great Commission is about,
...what Acts 1 is about.

"You will be my witnesses..."

Witnesses cause others to know something. They have knowledge and they bring it to others

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* Court systems don't want to know what you think, what you've heard, what you're committed to.

[1:02:25] **This is a radical shift. This is bringing knowledge of the kingdom of God of Jesus Christ, what He is doing today, as well as then to people as a basis for them deciding how to live their lives.**

We are not called to get people to do things. We are called to help people to know things. If we get people to do things, we'll spend the rest of our life restarting them to do things.

The natural progression is that they would achieve an understanding of life in the Kingdom of God that would make what they do a natural expression of their knowledge.

* Driving - Teaching someone to drive. After they come to knowledge, you don't have to get them to do things. They do them because they know they are right and good and appropriate.

Same thing for people who become disciples in the Kingdom of God and learn to live there as His disciples. You don't have to try to get them to be truthful. *"Who would want to lie?"* They are saying that with a background of knowledge. *"Since God is in charge of things and He is faithful, why would I lie?"*

Ephesians 4, Colossians 3 - "Lay aside malice"

(def.) Ill will to see other people harmed.

That's the natural response - transformation of character.

In the book of Acts, the transformation of lives as they step out on dependence of human organization. Sometimes that is manifest against prevailing practices.

* Widows being cared for. Jewish widows were better cared for

People from all around the world heard in their own language.

The opposite of Babel when God brought confusion of their language.

As the Kingdom of God in Christ, it is safe for them to be able to communicate, so He reverses Babel. The idea is we are going to see a transformation of life under Christ in the Kingdom of God that makes it safe for people to be able to cooperate. They will give a model for what it is like for people to live together who genuinely love one another.

"One another" - the hospital, the learning place where you learn it.

Luke 14 - You have to set aside your **family**. You're going to come into the fellowship of disciples and become the kind of person who can go back into

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your family safely and redemptively. The family is such a tragic display of the failure of human abilities. That's going to be redeemed now because we're moving away from human structures. There are going to be human structures but they will not be what runs life. The intent is to redeem them not necessarily to create a new set. There will be a new set but the point of the new set is to allow people to come into the spiritual hospital and recover and become capable of living under God as He intended them.

The field is whatever is good and right. Whatever is good, God is for that.

New Testament theme - "Doing good"

* Wesley - *"Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can."*

The picture of life under the Kingdom of God - what the disciples are called together in Trinitarian fellowship to learn and their life displays that. They are hopeless do-gooders because God is a hopeless do-gooder. He set up a world in which human beings can learn to live in the Kingdom of God in that way where there is no area that they touch that is not touched by the Kingdom of God... and that's eternal living.

Eternal life is not something that begins after you die. Translate it to "Eternal living" - living now in such a way that what you do is a part of God's life.

"Eternal life - know you and Jesus whom you sent" (John 17:3)

He's referring to an interactive, participative relationship now for what we are doing becomes a part of what God is doing and becomes eternal in that way. Quality of God's life is eternal life. We were meant for that.

The Book of Acts comes at a point where all the preparation has been completed. Jesus has come into the world to make real the power of the Kingdom of God.

The best people on Earth have crucified and killed the best man whoever lived and what do you know, He just gets up on the other side. Now He is creating a community of people who live in His eternal kingdom now.

Closing Prayer

~ ~ ~ **End of Session 1 @ 1:13:59** ~ ~ ~

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~ ~ ~ Session 2

[1:19:18]



"The Book of Acts – Session 2" (audio)

Look at the system of churches we now have. They are the best thing we have going. The people I know involved in churches are doing the best they can.

The big issue is the message and associated with the message is the idea of salvation.

The Message

The resurrection of Christ is the summary of the Kingdom of God.

"Repent the kingdom of God is at hand" is the fundamental proclamation.

"I am going to Jerusalem and they are going to kill me."

That was not their idea of a Davidic King. His disciples did not get that.

* Peter's denial of Jesus' death - He did not understand the Kingdom of God.

They could not comprehend it. They had not understood God as a spiritual being. Even though the teaching of the OT were sharply directed at them. They were still tied to physical realities. The resurrection leads them beyond that.

The real question - What is the message?

"Trust Jesus." He does not mean have the correct beliefs about Him but put your weight on Him. Trust is something very different in our culture. We associate "trust" with financial institutions and "faith" with churches.

* I've never heard of "Trust Baptist Church"

To trust Jesus would be to put your life on His claim of the reality that the Kingdom is right here. The church picks that up.

"Let your gentleness be known to all..." **Philippians 4:5-7**

It means don't take stuff into your own hands to make it happen. The reason given is because "the Lord is at hand."

"Be anxious for nothing..."

The gospel message - you can absolutely put everything in the reality of Jesus and His kingdom.

When this is presented in the book of Acts and the Letters it is referring to a kind of resignation to God. You turned everything over to God. *"Don't be anxious..."* God's got your back. Keep the conversation going. Prayer is asking and receiving in the fellowship of Christ of what we are doing together. My expectation is He will act with me to accomplish what He wants to come out of that operation. I trust that. I am able to go ahead, leave it to God and do what is right, do what I think is best, helpful. I work on my habits which is spiritual disciplines. I engage with it the increase my interactive relationship with God.

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The block that we face lies in an mistaken understanding of the message of what salvation is. If you get the message wrong, it will leave ordinary life out. That is basically what has happened in the prevailing Christians of the United States and Western Culture.

This always has to do with removing guilt. This has not always been true.

* *"Rock of Ages...the double cure - saved from wrath and made me pure."*

Salvation from sin is not just salvation from guilt. It is salvation from the power of wrongdoing over my life. It is the "double cure".

If you have message that does not encompass that, you're going to have a different version of salvation. If your message leaves out whole life, your salvation will leave out whole life.

Resurrection life in the Kingdom of God comes to enable us to easily and routinely escape the power of sin as a practice in our lives. [11:44]

This digs into the roots of the Old Testament - Over and over again to Obedience.

There's simply no excuse for not obeying.

Normally done by Institutions they have developed to mediate God's favor on the people of Israel.

If you read the Psalms, you're not surprised by this.

* Psalms - Spiritual mud wrestling. You get down in the stuff.

People who engage with God and obey live the 23rd Psalm life.

Salvation as it comes down through the ages gradually moves further and further away from obedience. [13:25]

A human arrangement for forgiveness is something the church very early on offers to human beings and makes them dependent upon the human organization. The human organization has control over forgiveness.

* Catholic Church - sacraments - forgiveness dispensed through Priests

Kings in Europe quailed before Bishops, much less the Pope

Church would dispense or could withhold forgiveness

Holiness wound up in the monasteries

From Eusebius on ordinary people don't have that kind of holiness. They are able to draw upon the special quality of the special people to help them get through life and eventually be received by God. That is a very powerful thing - Salvation is for forgiveness and we have control over forgiveness.

* Reformation - In not long Salvation becomes tied to correct doctrine

40,000 Christian denominations.

Faith became associated in believing the right things rather than trust in Christ and believing in the Kingdom of God.

The Message - the resurrection of Christ and the availability of that life to everyone who trusts Him.

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The guidance of the Kingdom of God over the activities of those who are in the fellowship of disciples.

Salvation - acceptability in that life by the power of God that now you get a different quality of existence - resurrection life.

Colossians 3 - *"Since you have been raised up with Christ, set your affections on the things above...because you are dead"*

Your old life you have now transferred out of that.

* Running on electricity and you've switched over to propane.

The reality of the resurrection life in the Kingdom of God is now what is running your life and what you live in terms of with reference to organizations.

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[18:30]

Human organization occurs under the Kingdom of God

Acts 2:1 - *"a sound from heaven"* - a power directly from Heaven.

It acts among the people who are living in **the name of Jesus**.

Learning to act in the name of Jesus. Kingdoms work by names.

* Elect a President - sign papers, put their names on things, give orders from them individually.

Acting in the name of Jesus is the way to bring the immediate presence of God and His kingdom into human life.

He had told them to do that. They had to learn how to do that because He was no longer here but they had His name.

Acts 3:6 - Peter & John - *"Silver and gold have I none, but what I do have, I give in the name of Jesus Christ."*

The name is access to the Kingdom of God in meeting issues in real life around them. They are beginning to get be confident in the Kingdom of God. They are realizing a community is here that is not a human community. It has power and it can directs us without organization in human terms. We have to be careful how we work that out. Humans have to be organized but they don't have to trust their organization.

One of the most important things for us to understand today is how human organizations work and how leaders work because it does not come by the sword.

People in religious authority took human means.

Acts 13:11 - Paul & Barnabas on the Isle of Cyprus.

"The Lord's hand is going to be upon you and you will be blind."

That's different from taking a sword and punching his eyes out. Paul knew he had the power to effect people's lives but he tried to stay out of it. That is deeply indicative in how we are to handle power.

We have to have organizations. Elders & Bishops is a loving presence that does not hesitate to speak the truth but it does not rely on human power to enforce it.

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Peter & John spoke on behalf of the kingdom and the result is present in the visible world. It was not produced by anything in the world but two persons acting in a power that was not in their own power.

Acting in someones' name - using the power and acting for a benefit other than themselves.

Acts 8 - Philip in Samaria

[26:30]

"But once they began to believe Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, men and women alike were baptized." **v. 12**

—> **The Message:** People could live in the availability of the Kingdom of God through confidence in Jesus.

That is our message today if we've got one! Our problem today is we are not preaching the message that Philip and Paul did.

They did not preach a kingdom without Jesus and they did not do Jesus without a kingdom.

At this point in the development, they are experimenting in how it works but the presence of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus is breaking out in "the public square." There is not a square that is not public. People live in the public square.

* Secular Universities

Has anyone established that reality is secular?

There is no "secular square".

Private places are not private because God is there.

Jesus is beginning to increasingly come on the scene as a part of the Kingdom.

Acts 17

[30:30]

People are jealous of Paul's success.

6 When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; **7** and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

"Spiritual transformation is growth in grace."

Acts 19:8 - "Persuading them about the Kingdom of God."

We have to be very careful about this if we are going to engage of the moral revolution fo the world.

Putting human life on a different basis.

Messing with the message messes with the invitation.

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How we have brought people to Christianity does not lead them to become disciples of Jesus.

We don't evangelize for discipleship.

I'm suggesting we invite people to become disciples.

We have a lot of approaches to haze them into it.

Am I preaching a gospel that has a natural tendency make them want to be disciples?

There's a lot of confusion. Jesus had to deal with a lot of people who wanted to get on the Gravy Train with Jesus.

NT is a book of disciples. "Disciple" is mentioned some 300 times in the NT.

Are Christians disciples?

If you are not a disciple, do you go to Heaven when you die?

Part of the problem is we've hung the whole message on "forgiveness".

Do you think you'd really be comfortable in Heaven if you are not a disciple and you did not love God?

You have to decide you are not God. What happens to my kingdom?

That's probably the greatest threat to God's Kingdom. My kingdom is the range of my effective will - where I want done, get's done. You might have to worry about that. My kingdom vs. your kingdom. You cross my will and I get mad.

If you die tonight, where would you go?

We also have to ask - If you don't die tonight, where will you go?

Ask, "how are you doing with your kingdom?"

We have to say things that will help them. That's why in the book of Acts you see preaching about the Kingdom of God because that repositions everything.

"I'd like to become a disciple. How do I become one?"

"You become a disciple of Jesus. Learn how to lead your life as Jesus would lead your life if He were you."

Trust the Kingdom of God as if it were here. Put it to the test.

Try his commands. "Don't return evil for evil."

A disciple is one who is learning to live in the Kingdom of God not just learning to do what Jesus said. Not, "OK, I'm going to do that!"

"The Book of Acts"

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It's understandable when looking at the sermon on the Mount, "I can't do that." You can't. He's talking about becoming a different person. Discipleship is a position that you have accepted with some understanding and a vision of what it would look like.

"Spiritual Formation" (def.) - The process of the transformation that goes on in the individual.

Disciples can be very green. Thank God for grace. God accepts green people. Grace make it possible for green people to commit themselves to what the Scripture say.

Stop concentrating on doing the right thing but becoming the kind of person who would do the right thing.

Ephesians 4 - "*Deceitful lusts or desires*" "If you give me that, I'll be happy!"

A disciple accepts a position with Jesus Christ and they experience a deliverance from the old life to the new life that is eternal.

Paul preaching the Kingdom of God.

How you come to live there and learn to grow to the point of Ephesians 4 & 5. In conjunction with the Spirit to learn what you need to learn to walk with Christ.

Ephesians Elders

[48:00]

"Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ."

v. 25 - "With all you to whom I was preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God." - Kingdom, repentance, turning to God and putting your whole faith in God.

Jesus and the Kingdom are coming together.

Paul & others in the book of Acts are gradually closing the gap.

Acts 28

[50:00]

Paul had a free ride from the government to Rome.

If we don't preach Him as Kingd, we will never have disciples.

"Aren't you worried about missing out on the most important thing in your life?"

Salvation is being caught up in a life Jesus is now living on Earth.

"The Book of Acts"

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Where is He living this life? Not just in church.

The primary location is the world in which we created for. Wherever I am, whatever I am doing. That's where I come to know the reality of God. It involves reframing my mind, what I think about in life.

When you see in the book of Acts that goes all the way back to the creation if Genesis.

What am I that you are involved in my life? (Psalm 8)

What must I be if God pays any attention to me?

"I am an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe."

If you don't understand that, the rest of it won't make any sense. If you understand what Jesus is doing in the world, it will start to make sense.

"Death" - I begin to think differently.

CS Lewis, Weight of Glory - Most common human being - you might be inclined to worship or run from as in a nightmare.

The first big issue in the New Testament is equality of human beings.

"No Greek, No Jews." Colossians 3

Discrimination - Doesn't move me.

You can get tired hearing about social issues because they are presented as "social issues" not personal issues.

Last verses of the book of Acts,

"30 And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."

He was not supported by human organizations. He was there because God put him there. He wanted to be there. The Kingdom of God brought all kinds of resources to put him there.

The book of Acts is a revelation of how the people of God move independently of human arrangements. There will be arrangements, institutions. It's when you try to live in them independently of God, things go sour.

"The Book of Acts"

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Father will send another presence - "parakletos". Jesus and the Father will move in with you when you follow His words. They will be acting, instructing and guiding beyond what you ever thought about.

When we look at the book of Acts, we are looking at life as God meant it now and forever. It enables us to take our whole life where the power and character of God are exhibited.

How would the world look if all the affairs of human institutions would be caught up in God?

Art - Where are the Christian artists willing to step into that realm? They will catch a lot of flack. You go with the knowledge that God will act with you. That's the Kingdom of God in action. Do you win every battle? Probably not. People are stubborn. That's what we live through as people of Jesus Christ. We can look in history and see the difference it makes to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Law - the idealism and bass for law is so obvious. You have to make choices how you are going to be a lawyer. The system wears people down. They discover justice is "due process". The Law is a place of strong, good people who stand for what Law really does historically stand for.

~ ~ ~ End of Session 2 @ 1:06:30 ~ ~ ~

"The Book of Acts"

Dallas Willard - 2 Sessions @ Renovare [2:33:18]

Q & A

[1:06:30]

Q - [Richard Foster] - Areas Renovare has been under divine governance and areas under human governance?

A - What was assumed as standard in the churches may have been more influential than it should. Renovare has been counter-cultural. Renovare has been a watering hole. The difficulty of challenging the message of what is salvation is really hard. I'm not for sure that we have really confronted that. Influencing theological schools. We've tried. The Renovare Institute is a real move in that direction. Perhaps now is the time to look at that again and how we might get at this fundamental question.

Q - We react far to the other way.

A - [1:14:14] I think we do. That is based on the idea of what we take our message to be and we accept the idea that our message has nothing to do with workplace community, what's happening to the arts and the professions in our culture. That's something we've got wrong. We have to go back and start here and understand that the message is not forgiveness of sins and I'd like to get you to do what you can do to get your sins forgiven.

Here's where pastors are going to have to lead. Who is going to lead the pastors? Renovare has to take on the educational establishment and say, *"We have to tell you things you can verify by empirical study and thoughtful examination and guide your life by. We are not in this little corner over here called faith."*

Q - "Condemnation" in John 3:17-18, Romans 8:1-2

A - [1:15:40] Romans 8 condemnation is the condemnation in Romans 7. John 3:17-18 - Includes the condemnation of Romans 7 & 8 but it is more "they have judged themselves".

"Wrath" is a consequence. The primary consequences is not "wrath" but it is the condition of the people...doing stupid stuff.

* Pain in marriage & divorce.

Q - Where have you written on the misunderstanding of salvation?

A - First 4-5 chapters of *Spirit of the Disciplines* where I talk about Christianity as a life.

~ ~ ~ Q & A ends @ 1:19:18 ~ ~ ~

Information & resources about Dallas Willard Ministries — dwillard.org

Links to a Willard Toolbox with dozens of teachings with A/V & notes:

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