

World Upside Down: The Book of Acts

Acts 2:42-3:10

- 1. Every diet or hair growth company likes to boast “before and after” pictures. What’s the appeal of this approach?**
- 2. The gospel is embodied in the Christian community (vv. 42-43).**

- i. The Apostles’ teaching (*didache*)

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; cf. 1 Cor. 11.23, 1 Timothy 3.16

- ii. The fellowship (*koinonia*)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship (*koinonia*) with us; and indeed our fellowship (*koinonia*) is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

- 1 John 1:1-3; cf. 1 Corinthians 1.9

- iii. The breaking of bread

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

- 1 Corinthians 10:16

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

- Acts 20:7

iv. The prayers

Lex orandi, lex credendi: “the rule of prayer is the rule of believing.”

3. The community’s *koinonia* spills over into its *oikonomia* (vv. 44-45).

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

- 1 John 3:16-18

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich....For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

- 2 Corinthians 8:9, 13-15

4. When the church orders its life faithfully, the entire community is blessed. (vv. 46-47).

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

- Galatians 6:10

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

- Jesus, in Matthew 5:14–16

5. The Christian community is in continuity with God’s ancient people and promises (3:1).

Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

- Philippians 3:2–3

We do not concede to them that they are the Church, and in truth they are *not* the Church; nor will we listen to those things which, under the name of Church, they enjoin or forbid. For, thank God, today a child seven years old knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd. For the children pray thus: *I believe in one holy Christian Church*. This holiness does not consist in albs, tonsures, long gowns, and other of their ceremonies devised by them beyond Holy Scripture, but in the Word of God and true faith.

- Smalcald Articles III §12

6. God gives attention to the lowly (vv. 2–5).

For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly,
but the haughty he knows from afar.

- Psalm 138:6

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the humble estate of his servant.”

- Luke 1:46-47

7. The ministry of Jesus is recapitulated in His name (vv. 6-8).

That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.”

- Luke 5:22-26; cf. Luke 16.20

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

- Isaiah 35:5-6

8. The greatest witness of the Church is the changed lives of her people (vv. 9-10).

“The only really effective defense for Christianity comes down to two arguments, namely the saints the Church has produced and the art which has grown in her womb.”

- Joseph Ratzinger (aka Pope Benedict)

Only let your manner of life (*politeuesthe*) be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

- Philippians 1:27-28