

Wednesday, August 09, 2006

Comment: I have been reading Acts and not seeing why you think that the place where the disciples and followers met was in the Temple. Don't think it is of great importance but it is interesting.

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Answer: Thanks for your comment. It is encouraging to know that there are those who are studying and digging into what is being said. I scares me when I think some are just taking what they hear and assuming it is so...

You are right, where the church met is not the most important issue. It does shows that the disciples had undergone a complete change of heart and attitude. Where they had been hiding in rooms behind closed doors they were now out in the public meeting place - on the enemy's front door if you will - worshipping, teaching, and meeting regularly.

My belief that they met on the temple grounds in the area of Solomon's porch is just that - a personal belief. After Acts 1:14, Scripture does not say absolutely one way or the other until we get to Acts 3:1. So taking what scripture does say coupled with the architecture and custom of the time period, my belief that it is the Temple is a conclusion. Any time we draw a conclusion this way the most we can say is that it is possible - maybe even probable. If God's Word declares something, there is no debate.

Acts 1:4] And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

Jesus instructs those who were gathered with Him when He ascended to go to Jerusalem and wait ... He did not tell them to return to an address or house but to the city. What they did was they returned to an upper room – probably where they celebrated Passover.

Based on this, we make the assumption that it is there that the Holy Spirit fell on them, indwelling them. Nothing in scripture makes this necessary.

In the upper room there were the 11 and several of the women, based on other scriptures the number of women were no more than 5-6. So we are talking about 20 people in an upper room. Certainly feasible and containable. BTW – this is probably also the room they hid behind closed doors and where Jesus appeared to them following His resurrection.

Acts 1:12] Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey. [13] And when they were

come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. [14] These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

In the upper room these 20 or so spent their time praying. This was not just praise and worship; it was supplication. They were fervently asking for something.

Act 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

Verse 15 goes on to say that in those days –the time between Jesus Ascension and Pentecost that the disciples cast lots to fill the vacancy left by Judas Iscariot. It also says that there were 120 gathered together when this happened.

I don't care when or where you live(d), 120 people gathering together on a regular basis is a chore. The larger homes were built around courtyards. The 120 could possibly gather in the courtyard but given the size of the homes and streets, etc in Jerusalem during that time, the home would have had to owned by a very rich, very influential person in Jerusalem.

Think back to the largest gathering you have hosted at home – be it Thanksgiving or a summer barbeque. How many were there? Was it chaotic? Remember this was not an open house, where people came and went throughout the day – it was a 'business meeting' of sorts.

In my mind, it is far more likely that 'in those days' the group met at the Temple grounds which is where you expect to find devout Jews on a regular and daily basis – (my suspicion only).

Acts 2:1 opens 10 days following Jesus Ascension saying the day of Pentecost had now fully come – it was well into the day of Pentecost. It goes on to indicate 'they were all with one accord in one place'. We traditionally assume it was the same place they were in when the events of Chapter 1 occurred. All we can say for certain is they were in Jerusalem somewhere and were all of one mind.

Acts 2:1] And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 2:2 goes on to say there came a sound from heaven. The sound filled the 'house' where they were sitting.

Acts 2:2] And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

It is the English word house that adds to the thought that they were still in the upper room of chapter 1. It could be a literal house, but I don't think so. If it was a private residence, it was a huge house and grounds to host the 20-120 believers for 10 days – something not found in Jerusalem except in palaces. (Keep in mind that the High Priest's house hosted the 70 or so members of the Sanhedrin so there were some capable of hosting the 120 but there were very few and they were owned by the authorities).

The word house in our English Bible is used in several ways:

Thayer Definition: G3624 oikos

- 1) a house
 - 1a) an inhabited house, home
 - 1b) any building whatever
 - 1b1) of a palace
 - 1b2) the house of God, the tabernacle
 - 1c) any dwelling place
 - 1c1) of the human body as the abode of demons that possess it
 - 1c2) of tents, and huts, and later, of the nests, stalls, lairs, of animals
 - 1c3) the place where one has fixed his residence, one's settled abode, domicile
- 2) the inmates of a house, all the persons forming one family, a household
 - 2a) the family of God, of the Christian Church, of the church of the Old and New Testaments
- 3) stock, family, descendants of one

Part of Speech: noun masculine

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: of uncertain affinity

Citing in TDNT: 5:119, 674

Strong's defines it:

Of uncertain affinity; a dwelling (more or less extensive, literally or figuratively);
by implication a family (more or less related, literally or figuratively):
- home, house (-hold), temple.

Barnes thinks it was a literal home and comments:

[All the house] Some have supposed that this was a room in or near the temple. But as the temple is not expressly mentioned, this is improbable. It was probably the private dwelling mentioned in Ac 1:13. If it be said that such a dwelling could not contain so large a multitude as soon assembled, it may be replied that their houses had large central courts (See the notes on Matthew 9:2), and that it is not affirmed that the transactions recorded in this chapter occurred in the room which they occupied. It is probable that it took place in the court and around the house.

Matthew Henry's Commentary says:

2. It was when they were all with one accord in one place. What place it was we are not told particularly, whether in the temple, where they attended at public times (Lk 24:53), or whether in their own upper room, where they met at other times. But it was at Jerusalem, because this had been the place which God chose, to put his name there, and the prophecy was that thence the word of the Lord should go forth to all nations, Isa 2:3. It was now the place of the general rendezvous of all devout people: here God had promised to meet them and bless them; here therefore he meets them with this blessing of blessings. Though Jerusalem had done the utmost dishonour imaginable to Christ, yet he did this honour to Jerusalem, to teach his remnant in all places; he had this in Jerusalem. Here the disciples were in one place, and they were not as yet so many but that one place, and no large one, would hold them all. And here they were with one accord.

The leading commentators are split and uncertain. All seem to indicate that it could have been the Temple area where these events take place if it was not in the literal upper room of a house. It is what happened next that convinces me that it was in the Temple area and not in a large home with or without a courtyard....

Acts 2:5] And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. [6] Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

A multitude, a very large number, given that 3,000 were added to the church and that the crowd was split in their opinion of the events they were witnessing, could easily be much, much larger than the 3,000 who believed and were converted that day. No home or courtyard in Jerusalem, including the streets outside the home could accommodate a crowd or 3,000+ gathering. No home or courtyard would accommodate or permit the

3,000+ gathered to see what was happening much less hear sermons in 15+ different languages.

Also, keep in mind, if this crowd had gathered in the streets, the Romans would have broken it up by force immediately – unless – it was in a location where Jews gathered in mass numbers on a regular basis and which was under full Jewish authority – like the Temple grounds.

Acts 2:14] But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them,

Acts 2:41] Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Between Verse 41 and 42, time passes. Verse 42 says the 3,000+ converts and believers 'continued steadfastly' in the teaching of the apostles. It says they fellowshiped and ate together in each others homes and those who had needs (were visitors to Jerusalem) had their needs met (by the believers who lived in Jerusalem).

Acts 2:42] And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2:43] And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. [44] And all that believed were together, and had all things common; [45] And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

It implication is that they met as a group to hear God's word and the 'apostle's doctrine' taught. Then they went into private home for food, shelter and fellowship. Where would the 3,000+ gather? Verse 46 tells us - they continued to meet where they had initially gathered - in the temple...

Acts 2:46] And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, [47] Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

The church 'continued' with one accord 'on the temple'. The phrase 'continuing daily' to me is telling. To me it indicates they had previously been meeting daily in the temple areas. You cannot continue something you had not been previously doing. Some may argue the term continue relates to being in 'one accord' and not 'in the temple'. Given the construction, I don't know how anyone can separate the two clauses.

The Lord added to the church daily. The 3,000+ grew in number quickly. That is why Peter and John are found going up to the Temple at 3 PM, 'at the hour of prayer'. They were going to "church" to teach and lead a Bible study about Jesus... it is where the 'church' met – in a large hall or room (a house) on Solomon's porch commonly used by Jewish rabbi's to teach their disciples.

Acts 3:1] Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. [2] And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

Acts 3:11] And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

Notice – all the people seeing the healed lame man who was moments ago sitting at the Beautiful gate ran to gather around Peter and John (and the church, who were now at their regular meeting place) on Solomon's porch. Except for meeting the body of believers, there is no other reason for Peter and John to be on Solomon's porch which was at the far south end of the Temple grounds. - the Temple itself standing on the north end. As you read on in Acts, it is where they are arrested and taken into custody by the Temple authorities for the first time.

The issue of whether the church meetings moved from the house to the Temple grounds in Acts 1:15 or Acts 3:1 is not a big deal in the scheme of things unless what we believe violates what Scripture presents as fact. The meeting place could have changed at either point or somewhere in between.

Based on what Scripture says actually did happen and adding history and some logic, I fall on the side of the church meeting on Solomon's porch in the Temple grounds beginning in Acts 1:15 – but, I won't fight over it....