

Week 6

THE JERUSALEM CHURCH IN ACTION – PT 1

As the newly Spirit-filled Apostles take to the streets of everyday living in Jerusalem, it is worth noting that they continued in the spiritual habits they were taught as devout Jews. There were three hours of the day in which the Jewish people offered specific prayers to God. The Jewish workday was from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. Chapter 3, verse 1, tells us that Peter and John were going up to the Temple for the “hour of prayer”, and that it was the ninth hour; that would be 3:00 pm. There were three special “hours of prayer” for the Jews: 9:00 am, Noon, and 3:00 pm.

As Jews who were now Christians this ninth hour took on a special meaning, as it has for many Christians through the ages, for this was the hour of Jesus death upon the cross. The Christian Church continued this form of corporate prayer in what became known as the “Liturgy of the Hours.”

Over the centuries, prayer books were written in both the East and Western traditions to guide believers through a time of prayer at appointed times. The early hour became known as Lauds, or ‘Morning Prayer’, and the afternoon time became known as ‘Vespers’ or ‘Evening Prayer’. A fourth hour of prayer was eventually added called, ‘Compline’, or ‘Night Prayer’, which one would pray before going to bed. These ‘Liturgy of the Hours’ of prayer are still used by many Christians around the world in many denominations and in most all parts of the world.

It is beautiful to note that the very first miracle of the Church Age was manifest as Peter and John were in a spirit of prayer. After all, prayer is the greatest work of the church and the believer.

John Wesley said, “I believe that God does nothing, but in answer to prayer.” Think about that for a moment. If it’s true, and I believe it is, then prayer is the greatest thing we can do. Clearly the Apostles thought so as well. Even with their newly bestowed, in-dwelt spiritual power, they needed to be with God’s people in prayer throughout the day.

The fact that the man healed was lame from birth should not be overlooked. No one would be able to deny that the God had healed the man. The same was true in Jesus’ ministry. The gospels carefully not when someone was blind or lame from birth, so that it was indisputable that God had interceded to heal a life-long condition.

As Peter and John interact with the lame man it is important to note that Peter calls out the man for his attention to be fixed upon both he and John. The two of them represent the unity of the Apostolic office. Peter could easily have said, “Look at me!”, but he wanted the man to realize what was about to happen was from both he and John in the name of the Apostolic ministry, and by the power of Christ.

C. THE CHURCH MINISTERING IN JERUSALEM (3-8:3)

1. A Sign to Israel: A Lame Man Healed – The 1st Miracle of the Church Age (3:1-11)

a. The habit of the Apostles

- The Liturgy of the Hours

b. Lame from birth

- Common in the East for beggars to position near shrines
- No one could deny the miracle was of God

c. The Oneness of Apostolic ministry

- The only thing the church has is what the world needs
- The age of miracles – have they stopped?

2. A Warning to Israel: Peter's Sermon (3:12-26)

a. Early Christian preaching

1. The Cross
2. The Resurrection
3. The Power of the Risen Lord

b. Knowing their limits opened unlimited possibilities

- “Yet not I, but through Christ in me”

