

Acts Bible Study Class #10

Up until now, we see that Presbyters have been ordained by the Apostles. Some Protestants will claim that the Apostles did not have a priestly role. In defense of the truth that the Apostles had a priestly role, against those who claim that they didn't:

Romans 15.16 (in Eng. the RSV is the most correct translation of this verse) upholds a special priestly service of the Apostles: "But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service [hierourgounta, a form of hierourgeo--priestly administration] of the gospel of God so that the offering [prospora--i.e. ref. to Eucharist] of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit [i.e. ref spec. to the epiclesis]."

Acts Chapter and verse notes:

--24.4-.15 In 24.4, St. Paul is accused of being "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." In vs. 14 St. Paul corrects them and, what they called the "sect" (lit. 'heresy') of the Nazarenes, St. Paul calls "the Way" and simply dismisses their calling it a sect as a false accusation. He follows the true and Orthodox Way of Christ, which is the true following and obedience to the Hebrew Law of the Old Testament. How do we know that Christianity is true? There are far more reasons than I can enumerate here. But in that all religions have a predicted expectation of a chosen Savior/redeemer, and Jesus Christ is the only person in history who fulfills this role, is this not a primary evidence? Likewise, there is no other religion besides Christianity (and Orthodox Christianity in particular) which has a tradition of ongoing keeping of the same message unblemished, as well as "signs following those that believe," God working with the Church and confirming the message of the preached word of truth in all generations by accompanying signs (Mark 16.20), which confirm the truth of the Resurrection. But there are many other reasons why we know that Christianity is true: the witnesses who died (martyrs) and suffered, the triumphal and miraculous upholding of the Faith and the Church at crucial times, the perfect fulfillment of thousands of years of prophecy, the fulfillment of all expectations, the only place where hope finds meaning.

--The typology of Christianity is upheld most of all in Orthodoxy, which does

constant typological actions and not just pronouncements, as others do (for example, the typology of placing the star over the lamb and citing the Scriptural message of Matt. 2.9).

--25.11 An interesting note, in this defense, St. Paul appeals to Caesar.

--25.19 The Doctrine of the saving acts of Christ is called here "their own superstition and about one Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive." Sound familiar? Many in our world today (and this century) ridicule and sometimes despise the beliefs of Christianity.

--26.8 Why is it thought incredible to any of the Pharisees or accusers of Paul, who supposedly believe in God Almighty more than Paul (they are his accusers on this matter), that God raises the dead? Could not God raise the dead if He wills? He did it directly to His Son, and then through the Apostles, but they still do not believe.

--26.13 This light is "brighter than the sun," i.e. one can distinguish between natural and divine light--this was no natural light.

--26.17-18; the aim of preaching and of everything of Apostolic nature is so that the peoples of the nations come to Christ and live, and take a "place among those who are sanctified by faith" in Christ (.18).

--26.19-20 Paul did not disobey "the heavenly vision," that is, the vision of God, because it was God Himself coming to Paul. Rather, he openly declared the Gospel of Christ unto repentance, and did not cease to tell the story of the vision and to cite its witnesses as a part of the evangelistic message (a very important point), despite the fact that many would still disbelieve and think that he was mad or ridiculous or crazy. Festus himself thought that Paul was crazy after St. Paul revealed the vision (.24). But Paul insists that it is the "sober truth," as was said earlier in Acts, "we cannot help but speak of the things we have seen and heard."

--26.32 Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed earlier to Caesar.

--27.23 An example of St. Paul venerating an angel ("the angel whom I bow down to--Gk latrou--which most often refers to worship, is here used to mean veneration (not the worship of God but the bowing to God as he comes through his holy ones)

by the Church Fathers, being an example of Paul using words "contrary to contextual usage," as St. John Chrysostom says. The most famous example of Paul doing this is when he calls a type an allegory, 'contrary to usage.'

--27.31 Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.

--27.35 Breaking of bread with thanks

--28.2 We know Luke was there again because he refers to himself as being there ("us").

--28.3-6 St. Paul gets bit by a viper but no harm comes to him, which is one of the fulfillments in Luke of the promise given in Mark 16.17-18, of the signs that follow those that believe, by which these men thought him to be a god.

--28.7 They were received and entertained hospitably. Hospitality is an extremely important and Trinitarian virtue.

--28.8-9 Another fulfillment of Mark 16.17-18 in the person of Paul.

--28.24-25 With the Christian Orthodox Way being preached, some will be convinced and believe, and some will not. In any case, they will certainly have disagreements among themselves, for he did not come to bring earthly peace, but a sword, which is the sword of the Spirit, that which brings heavenly peace.

--28.31--St. Paul teaches about the Lord Jesus "quite openly and unhindered." There is an obvious ellipsis at the end of the Book of Acts. This "open-ended" conclusion of Acts refers us to the rest of the Sacred Deposit handed down in Holy Tradition, Church History, the lives of the Saints, and the life of the Church in general from generation to generation.

