

## Article of the Month – December 2012

### Missions & Eschatology (7) – Acts

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Although there is no heavy accent on eschatology in Acts, it is not absent either. It did occupy the thoughts of the disciples, given the fact that they asked Jesus about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel,<sup>1</sup> just before He ascended. At that time, before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they apparently had not yet a clear understanding of the distinction between the spiritual Kingdom of God, as would become visible in His church on earth and the Messianic Kingdom – which they knew from the OT prophecies

– that will be established on earth after the *second* coming of Christ. From later passages in Acts we learn that the apostles had received more revelation about the differences in appearance between the two, and about the time frame in which either would become visible.

There are two passages that I would like to mention. The *first* appears at the end of one of Peter's sermons.<sup>2</sup> In each of these verses we see eschatological terms: times of refreshing (19); that He may send the Christ (obviously referring to His second coming, 20); He remains in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything (21); anyone who does not listen to Him will be completely cut off (23); all the prophets from Samuel on have foretold these days (24); all peoples on earth will be blessed (25).

Our missionary responsibility comes in with verse 23: balanced preaching must contain warning notes, not only an emphasis on the beauty of the remaining promises. In the Western world it has become very unpopular to include such warnings; people rather hear about heaven, than about the consequences of unbelief and a life in sin.

Du Plessis<sup>3</sup> explains this passage, the *Χρονων αποκαταστασεως παντων* (Greek: *Chronoon apokatastaseos pantoon*, the time of the restoration of all things),<sup>4</sup> as relating 'to the *edenic conditions* that will prevail on earth after the return of Christ'.<sup>5</sup>

The *second* passage contains words of James:<sup>6</sup> Christ will return, rebuild David's fallen tent, rebuild ruins and bring restoration (16); so that the remainder of men may seek the Lord (17); these things that have been known for ages (18).

Du Plessis comments on this passage, that 'The restoration of the fallen tent of David forms part of the restoration of all things which Peter predicted.'<sup>7</sup> He explains that 'The fallen tent of

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:6

<sup>2</sup> 3:19-25

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Lemmer du Plessis 'The Return of Christ', Pretoria, South Africa, Aktuapers, 2004:263

<sup>4</sup> Acts 3:21

<sup>5</sup> Is. 51:3; Ez. 36:35; Rom. 8:18-25

<sup>6</sup> Acts 15:16-18 – where he quotes Amos 9:11,12

<sup>7</sup> In 2004:266

David is ... not the Church, but the nation of Israel.’<sup>8</sup> This conclusion seems justified, since one can hardly compare the Church (against which the gates of hell will not prevail) with the fallen tent of David.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. :268