The Early Church and Paul

- Earliest material in the NT
- Kerygma of the early church
- Paul’s background
- The human situation
- Paul’s Christology

Earliest Material in the NT

- Kerygma = preaching, proclamation.
- Preaching of early church described in Acts, but Acts was written long after the events.
- Letters of Paul earliest documents to be written; they preserve earlier material.
  - Comes from worship setting.
  - Requires a judicious use of form criticism.

Earliest Material in the NT

- Aramaic expressions: *Abba, maranatha.*
  - Shows early church called Jesus “Lord”
  - Contradicts W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*
Earliest Material in the NT

• Aramaic expressions: *Abba, maranatha.*

• Confessional fragments
  – “Jesus is Lord” - Rom. 10:9-10
  – Larry Hurtado: early church was “binitarian.”
  – Romans 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

• Christological hymns
  – “V” pattern: descends and ascends
  – Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:2-4; Col. 1:15-20; 1 Tim. 3:16; John 1:1-14.

• Shows that the early church (before Paul) had a very high Christology.

Kerygma of the Early Church

• C. H. Dodd on the apostolic preaching:
  – The age of fulfillment has dawned.
  – This happened through the ministry of Jesus.
  – Jesus has been exalted at God’s right hand.
  – Holy Spirit has been poured out as sign of this.
  – Messianic age will soon be completed with Christ’s return.
  – Repent to receive forgiveness of sins, Holy Spirit, and promise of salvation.  (Ladd 365)
Kerygma of the Early Church

Look at the handout on the preaching in Acts. What elements do you see?

Kerygma of the Early Church

- Good news of fulfillment of God’s promises
- Jesus as descendent of David
- Preparation by John the Baptist
- Ministry of Jesus of Nazareth showing the presence of God’s power
- Jesus was crucified by human beings, as part of God’s plan
- His death was for human sin.

Kerygma of the Early Church

- He was buried.
- God raised him from the dead, and the disciples were witnesses to this.
- God has exalted him to his right hand.
- Holy Spirit has been poured out as a result.
- Jesus will return to judge and to deliver.
- Therefore, repent, be baptized, receive forgiveness of sins.
Kerygma of the Early Church

We believe in one God, the Father All Governing, creator of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father as only begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, of the same essence as the Father, through whom all things came into being, both in heaven and earth; Who for us men and for our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming human. He suffered and the third day he rose… (Nicene Creed, 325)

Kerygma of the Early Church

• Note that the preaching in Acts is a narrative of what God has done in Christ.
• In post-NT times, the church moved away from narrative to philosophical declarations about Christ’s nature - because of the challenges the church was facing.

Kerygma of the Early Church

• Kingdom of God emphasized less.
  – Pentecost seemed to cure disciples of their nationalistic view of kingdom.
  – Preached by Philip (8:12); Paul (19:8; 20:24; 28:23).
  – Identified with preaching of Christ (28:31).
  – Looked to future fulfillment (14:2).
  – Expected the renewal of all things to take place at Christ’s return (3:20-21).
Kerygma of the Early Church

• Meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection
  – Fulfillment of God’s plan.
  – Death and resurrection made forgiveness of sins possible.
  – Exaltation brought outpouring of Holy Spirit.

• Jesus’ resurrection center of kerygma.
  – Explains change in disciples.
  – It was God’s vindication of Jesus.
  – It was an eschatological event (already/not yet).

• Ascension only in Luke/Acts.
  – Marks end of resurrection appearances.
  – Visible assurance of exaltation (to disciples).
  – Indication that he had returned to Father.
  – Now Jesus would be present through the Spirit.

Kerygma of the Early Church

• Identity of Jesus
  – Jesus proclaimed as Messiah (5:43; 8:5; 9:22).
  – His exaltation was as messianic king (Ps. 110).
  – His reign is “already” and “not yet.”
  – Jesus not called “Son of Man.”
  – Frequently called “Lord.”
Paul’s Background

• Which letters to include? (pseudonymity)
  – Ephesians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus
  – Sometimes Colossians, 2 Thessalonians
• Threefold background: Jewish, Hellenistic, Christian.
• His “conversion” led him to draw certain conclusions and reevaluate his theology.

Paul’s Background

• S. Kim says central points of theology can be traced to his Damascus road experience.
  – Jesus was alive; only God can raise the dead.
  – God had vindicated him; he was Messiah.
  – Reevaluate his death in light of resurrection; means righteousness doesn’t come by the law.
  – Jesus identified with those Paul persecuted.
  – Yet Jesus reached out to Paul by grace.
  – God was justifying the ungodly, including Paul and Gentiles.

Paul’s Background

• Paul’s eschatological dualism:
  – 1 Corinthians 15:20-28
  – Romans 8:9-11, 18:25
• Kingdom of God as future inheritance (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 15:50), associated with eschatological glory (1 Thess. 2:12); will come in fullness when Christ returns (2 Tim. 4:1).
• A present reality (Col. 1:13; Rom. 14:17).
Paul’s Background

• Sources of Paul’s thought:
  – Encounter with the risen Christ
  – Direct revelation through the Holy Spirit
  – Tradition passed on to him
  – Old Testament

The Human Situation

• Humanity outside of Christ:
  – Creation is fallen (Rom. 8); humans are enemies of God.
  – The world and humanity are in the power of evil spiritual forces.
  – Humans stand condemned for unrighteousness.
  – Humans are sinners, enslaved to sin.
  – Humans are in a state of death and under God’s wrath.
  – Humans are “in Adam.”

Paul’s Christology

• Person of Christ
  – Did he know about the historical Jesus?
  – Calls Jesus Messiah/Christ.
  – Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 4-5; Rom. 10:13; 1 Cor. 8:6).
  – Jesus is Son of God (Rom. 5:10; 8:3). He was sent to bring about our adoption (Gal. 4:4-7).
  – Jesus is God (Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13-14).
  – Jesus is fully human (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 5:15).
Paul’s Christology

- Christ as the last Adam:
  - Romans 5:12-19
  - 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 41-49
- Corporate solidarity with Adam and Christ.
  - Related to this age and the age to come.
  - What is the nature of the connection?
    - Legal representation; legal imputation
    - Participation in his nature
- Meaning of the death of Christ (handout)