

INTERPRETATION OF Acts 1: 8 AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN CROSS-CULTURAL GOSPEL MISSION

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Abstrak

Masalah dalam penelitian ini adalah kesadaran bahwa misi pemberitaan Injil adalah inti dari gereja. Namun, dalam pelaksanaan misi ini, itu tergantung pada bagaimana gereja menafsirkan ayat-ayat Alkitab tentang pokok misi. Interpretasi gereja itu sendiri, akan sangat ditentukan oleh interpretasi pendeta gereja. Pemahaman alkitabiah yang dipahami oleh pendeta diajarkan kepada gereja, dan kemudian secara umum akan diwujudkan dalam tindakan gereja dalam kehidupan sehari-hari atau dalam program gereja. Dalam hal ini penelitian ini akan menguji pemahaman para pendeta gereja di Konferensi Jawa Barat Kisah Para Rasul 1: 8, yang diyakini sebagai salah satu ayat misi utama dalam Perjanjian Baru, serta implementasinya pada kegiatan gereja. dalam konteks misi Injil lintas budaya.

Key: Budaya, Misi Pemberitaan Injil

Introduction

The discussion in this paper is about a general interpretation method on Acts 1:8, and its implementation on cross cultural gospel mission. This discussion will be the basis of interpretation and implementation.

Principle and Method of Bible Interpretation

The Bible as an authoritative book in the lives of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church Members, should be understood correctly by every SDA member, so that it can be a life's principle. Understanding the Bible correctly means to understand what it meant by the Biblical writers that were inspired by the Holy Spirit. For the readers of the time Bible was written, as well as for the readers of today.

Therefore, there are some portions of the Bible that can easy be easily understood, since the meanings are described in a clear and simple way, but there are some portions that are hard to understand and needed deeper research in order to understand what the writer meant. For example, the letter of Paul to the church in Thessalonica on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, is a portion of the Bible where what it meant by the wrtier is cleary described and easy to understand by the readers of that day, as well as the readers of today.

According to Hayes and Holladay, the difficulties to understand appear because of these things:

1. Bible readers has a third person perspective. It means, the readers of today is not the person who actively involved in the communication between Bible Writers and its readers when the Bible was written. Bible writers as well as its early readers, have known each other, so the communication among them can happen well. The writer can shape and express his messages to his recipients based on the conditions of his known recipients, so that the message can be understood by the recipients. Therefore in order to understand a writing correctly, the readers of today should understand the writer and place themselves as writers.
2. Bible texts are written with different languages to the language of the today's readers. Every language has a grammar, vocabulary and idioms, that are different with other languages. The grammar of the Bible writers, are different with the grammar of other languages. This makes it hard to understand what the Bible meant correctly, even though there are translations.
3. There is a gap between the cultures of the bible writers and today's readers. The cultural development causes a difference between the culture of bible context and the cultural context of today's readers.
4. There is a gap in the history of the Bible writers and today's readers. The separation of chronology between the writings makes the readers need a historical research in order to understand what the writers really meant.
5. There is a reality that in some portions of the Bible, are the result of the historical development. It means that the Bible is writtern by different people at different ages.
6. There are different texts in different parts of the Bible. Even though the differences are not in principle, but this creates a careful attention in order to find the real meaning of the writers.
7. The reality that the Biblical texts are considered holy, makes the readers differentiate how to read and study the Bible with how to read and study different ancient literatures..¹

By looking at the factors above, it is clear that many parts of the Bible cannot be traced its real meanings, by only reading it. In order to understand the real meaning of the biblical texts, a deep research is required.

Biblical research is not limited only to understand the real meaning of the writer on his time, but also for today's readers, to find the relevancy of the biblical texts for personal living, church or community of today. Therefore Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, suggested two ways in order to do research and understand the Bible. First, by exegesis, and second by hermeneutic.²

¹John H. Hayes & Carl R. Holladay, *Pedoman Penafsiran Alkitab* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2005), hal. 6-13.

²Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *Hermeneutik, Bagaimana Menafsirkan Firman Tuhan dengan Tepat!* (Malang: Penerbit Gandum Mas, 2003), hal. 8-17.

Exegesis

Exegesis comes from the Greek word, which means to “bring out from.’ When it is used to understand biblical documents, exegesis means to bring out the meaning from the biblical documents, and not to bring in personal ideas from that documents.³ Therefore in order to have a good exegesis is not an easy task. But exegesis should not be left out, especially in its connection to the understanding of fundamental beliefs of the church that will guide the church to do its task in this world, based on what the Lord has instructed.

The basic key to do exegesis in by reading the text carefully and asking the right questions that are connected with the texts. Those questions are related to the context and the content of the text.

Hermeneutic

Although the word ”hermeneutic” usually covers all parts of the interpretation, including exegesis, but that word is also used in a smaller meaning that is find the relevancy of the text for today.⁴ Dr. Hasan Susanto, M.Th. in his book *Hermeneutik*, uses the term exposition to describes this.⁵ In other book, ’*New Testament Exegesis*’, Gordon Fee, as the author, uses the word ’application,’ as a part of biblical research, after exegesis has been done.⁶ This step is the last part of a biblical research, to find what should be done by the researcher in a real action, according to the biblical texts that have been studied.

Hermeneutical Principle in the Book of Acts

The Book of Acts, is a historical record, that was written by Luke, a Greek medical doctor, that contains records on the development of the early church. When writing these records, Luke has a certain purposes, that he wanted to reach by writing some of the things that he felt needed to be recorded. Therefore when we do hermeneutic to small parts of the book of Acts, we cannot go away from the primary purpose of Luke in writing this book. These small parts should be understood as parts that if gathered together will help the readers to see the wider intention of the writer.

³Ibid.

⁴Fee & Douglas Stuart, hal. 15.

⁵Hasan Susanto, *Prinsip-prinsip Umum Hermeneutik*. (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2007), hal. 3.

⁶Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, 3rd Edition (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), hal. 150.

Therefore not all small parts, can contain normative or absolute principles to be done by the today's church, even though that thing was done by the early church.

The Study of Acts 1:8

In this part, exegetical and hermeneutical (exposition and application) will be done on Acts 1:8. An Exegesis starts with the general overview of the book of Acst, and will be continued with a specific overview on the above texts with exegetical principles that has been described above.

General Overview of the Book of Acts

The book of Acts is a writing that records the events related to the development of the early church, chronologically happened on the period after Jesus' ascension to heaven, around 33 AD, and the first imprisonment of Paul at Rome, around 60-62 AD. Some events were recorded also recorded in the ancient history,⁷ such as the death of Herod on 44 AD (Acts. 12:20-23), the reign of Claudius on 44-49 AD, that ordered all the Jews to go out from Rome (Acts 18:2), the government of Galio as governor on 51-52 AD (Acts 18:12), and the government of Felix that was replaced by Festus of 59 AD (Acts 24:27). This is very beneficial in order to build a basic chronology of the book of Acts.

The author of the Book of Acts

Even though the author of the book of Acts is not written explicitly, but the internal evidences point to doctor Luke. The book that is shown to Theofilus as a second writing, becomes a point that the author of this book is the same with the author of the gospel of Luke. The medical terms that were used in the gospel of Luke, increase the thoughts that the writer is a doctor (Luk. 4:38; Luk. 5:12; Luk. 18:25) and a medical doctor that accompanied apostle Paul in his mission is doctor Luke, like what Paul mentioned in his letters (Col. 4:14; II Tim 4:11 and Flm. 24), and also was stated by the author of the book of Acts in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16. Therefore, this evidence supports that the auhthor of the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts is the same person which is doctor Luke.

The Period of Time of The Book of Acts

Looking at the chronology in the book of Acts, it is clear that the writing happen after Paul arrived at Rome on the year 60-62 AD, since this is the last book before Paul met the Jews in Rome. On the other hand, the book of Acts never writes

⁷Merrill.C. Tenney, *Survey Perjanjian Baru* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2003), hal. 287-288.

about the court of Paul at Rom, the rebellion of Jewish people that was happened on the year 66 AD,⁸ the destruction of the sanctuary, than it will be indicated that the period of writing of the book of Acts is around the year before or is about 63 AD

Overview of Acts 1:8

The overview of Acts 1:8 cannot be separated with the whole context of the book of Acts, just like what has been presented before, and cannot be separated with the context of the whole Bible. That is why in this section we will do the meaning of Acts 1:8, by looking at its contexts

Immediate context of Acts 1:8

The statement of Jesus Christ that was recorded by Luke on Acts 1:8 was not mentioned without any prior event. Acts 1:1-6 is Luke's record on the context of what Jesus said in Acts 1:8.

Acts 1:1 - 3, is an opening letter of Luke to Theophilus, to give a foundation of all things that are written in the book of Acts. This basis is directly connected to the things Luke write in his first book, which is about the works and teachings of Jesus when he was here on earth. So in this section, we will see what the apostle did, that was recorded by Luke in the book of Acts, based on the continuation of what has been taught by Jesus Christ.

Moreover, if we look at Acts 1:2-5, we can see some repetitions to the last part of his first book about the reality of Jesus' suffering, resurrection that He relive lives, and His messages before His ascension to heaven. (cf. Luke 24:44-53).

The discussion in Acts 1:8

Acts 1:8 is a continuation of Jesus' answer in verse 7. Started with a Greek word 'ἐπι', that shows something in opposite with a previous topic. This shows that in terms of kingdom's realization is not something that is known by the student, so what Jesus has revealed in verse 8 is really important to see, that is about what the disciples shall do before the realization of the kingdom of God.

The first part of this text describes about what will happen to the disciples, as long as they are waiting for the perfect fulfillment of the kingdom of God that has been given by Jesus Christ that is to receive the Holy Spirit upon them. The continuation of this sentence, gives a clearer message, in which that the power of the Holy Spirit is not an ordinary power, but a power to be witnesses. Therefore this

⁸F. F. Bruce, *Tafsiran Alkitab Masa Kini 3, Matius-Wahyu: Kitab Kisah Para Rasul* (Jakarta: YKBK/OMF, 1992), hal. 323.

clearly waits for the fulfillment of the kingdom of God that will happen to the disciples through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, therefore they will be equipped to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

Believers for Today to be Witnesses for Christ

So far we can see that to be Christ's witness is one of the responsibilities that the disciples should do that is to listen directly to the instruction, before the realization of the fulfillment of the kingdom of God happened. By looking at this record, it is clear the call to be a witness is not a calling only for the hearers of that day exclusively, but it is continued and should be done by the believers of the church of God in all ages. This is based on the context of the book of Acts, that shows that people who were not from among the twelve disciples and apostle Paul, were sent to be witnesses such as Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus.

Responsibility of a Witnesses

Literally the word witness comes from the Greek word, $\omega\mu\omega\tau\omega\sigma$. This word has meaning meanings that should be seen in order to understand a correct task that should be done by the disciples and the people of today.

- (1) as a witness to ascertainable facts; (a) legally (MT 26.65); (b) generally, as one who testifies to something (RO 1.9);*
- (2) as one who declares facts directly known to himself; (a) from firsthand knowledge (AC 1.22) or (b) from firsthand experience (HE 12.1);*
- (3) as one who tells what he believes, even though it results in his being killed for it witness, martyr (AC 1.8; RV 17.6)*

From the above meaning, it is clear that the responsibility of a witness in Acts 1:8, is to share what he believes, and his readiness to bear the consequences of the message.

To be a witness means:

1. To bring the message of Jesus Christ as the Messiah that has saved sinners, in order to build His kingdom.
2. To teach what Jesus Christ taught and promised in realizing His kingdom.
3. That witnessing appears because of personal spiritual experience.
4. That witnessing is done by words and deeds.
5. A witness is someone who is ready to bear all the consequences of the message.

Geographical Location of Witnessing

At the last part of Acts 1:8, Jesus Christ shows the geographical location of the places where witnesses can work. Witnessing started at Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria and to the end of the world. This shows that Jesus gave a location to do witnessing not only in the original place of the disciples but to cover all the world.⁹ Therefore, it is clear that the work that is being given to the disciples is to witness at his own places, and to other places as well, that have different cultures. At the place where the culture has only a little difference, or at the place where there is a big cultural differences, like to the end of the world. All the writings of Luke in the book of Acts prove that this is correct.

Implementation of the Cross Cultural Gospel Mission

Implementation of the cross cultural gospel mission is a response of every believer or a church to the interpretation and understanding of Biblical Text. Therefore, supposedly this implementation is in accordance to what he believes, based on the instruction of God in the Bible. Where there is a discrepancy, maybe there is a negligence of the instruction of God that he believes, or there is a misunderstanding of the ways to implement God's instructions.

In this section, several implementations of cross cultural missions will be described by different writers and Christian institutions. The implementation that is described in this section, will be a basis to research the cross cultural gospel mission implementation by the church that is being the object of the research.

Church Mission Program

Every true Christian will be included in a fellowship. They will be Christian alone, but they will be included in a local church. Because the church is a fellowship of believers or *familia Dei* or the family of God. Therefore, the church should be a lively church that has excellent witnessing, where the Word of God and Ministries are being done there, including the mission implementation, based on the church interpretation of the Biblical truth.

Every church member should be involved in doing church services. The involvement in the church cannot be there accidentally, it should be encouraged and facilitated by the leaders of the church, or by the assignment to serve in the church or to run church organization. Include there is the cross cultural gospel mission. Dean Wierbracht writes that a church that does the Great Commission, is an active church

⁹, Roger E. Hedlund. *The Mission of The Church in the World*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991). hal. 189.

who prays, plans and works towards the fulfillment of the great mission.¹⁰ Therefore, planning is an important thing, and can be seen in a clear program. So the implementation can be strated with the church program.

In connection to the church program, allocation of budget should be given to this mission implementation. From the budget allocation, we can see what priorities have been given by the church to this mission implementation.

Different Forms of Mission Implementations

With the big number of churches, there will be many implementation program that can be done, based on the human and financial resources of each church. A this section, we are going to see some of the forms of the existing mission implementations.

Evangelism Prayer Commitment

One of the most basic implementation forms of cross cultural gospel preaching is prayer commitment. Prayer is an essential part of the lives of the believers. Without prayer, a person is declaring that he does not need God. Therefore prayer is very important in the implementation of evangelism.

This can be seen in the lives of the apostles and the early church. Before they do gospel ministry, Jesus told them to wait for the Holy Spirit, and to pray in one heart (Acts 1:14). They were not only praying prior to start this ministry, but they pray during the ministry is going on (Acts 2:42; 4:24-31; 12:5, 12). Dean Wiebracht quotes the writing of Robert Glover:

“From the day of the Pentacost and apostle Paul, through the ages until today, the story of mission has been the story of answered prayers. Every time the energy is given by a missionary, it will give result to a believer. Every effort for a new missionary that is blessed by God, has been a growth for a seed that was planted by the spirit of God in the heart of the praying people.”¹¹

Mission theme Preaching

New believers and old believers do not understand all God's ideas about the world. Therefore they should be taught to understand God's care for the salvation of all nations. One of the best ways for them is throught teaching from the pulpit. Michael K. Shipman writes:

¹⁰Wierbracht, hal. 46.

¹¹Ibid. hal. 63.

“Every sermon has a purpose encourage the church to act, that to make God’s people to do His will not only to know the facts about God. In that case, God reveals His will to humanity through His Words. So, in order to share the gospel, the preacher transfers that will. Therefore in every sermon is the will of God should be described well for every church.”¹²

Opening of New Churches in the Fields

The form of long term implementation can be in opening a new church at certain places outside local churches. The implementation of this form is a general form that is done by those who believe in conservative theology in Indonesia.¹³

The target of this implementation is to reach people and tribes that are unreached by the gospel and to serve them in a new church that is built through this outreach. So this implementation is different with the short term mission trip. Short term mission trip usually only gives one sided gospel preaching, and not following it up with teaching.

Preaching the Gospel program Through Community Service

The other form of the implementation of cross cultural gospel mission is through community services. This is especially done in the specific fields in Indonesia, where community services are very minimum. Through community services, Gospel can be preached to the people surroundings. The Church that implements this mission can work together with the local churches to nurture the people to be reached through community services.

The form of general community services can be in the formal education institution, informal education institution and at the economic centers, in order to make effort to build the economic potentiality of that area.

All these forms of community services can be tools to share the gospel and discipleship to the people in the fields that can be the targets of cross cultural gospel mission.

Supporting Mission through Institutions

Finally another implementation that can be done is to give support to the churches outside of a church territory or by doing combined works with the

¹²Michael K. Shipman, *Pembaharuan Pelayanan Mimbar* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup, 2006), hal. 13.

¹³Barclay, William. *Pemahaman Alkitab Setiap Hari, Kitab Kisah Para Rasul*. (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2007), hal. 312.

institutions under the West Indonesia Union Mission and cross cultural gospel mission.

The support of the churches in the fields can be done not only financially, but can be more that such as giving training and care. Just like we understand, there are some places who have difficult information access, so the either the gospel worker or the church pastors in that area, have a hard time to increase the skills and knowledge in order to complete their ministry. To give support to them in order to receive things that can complete their ministries.

Conclusion

These forms of the implementation of the cross cultural gospel mission that are mentioned above are the implementation that can be done by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and can be used as a basis of cross cultural evangelism implementation of the church.

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