

## The Birth of the New Testament Church (Acts 2:1-47)

### I. Introduction

#### A. *This Week in Clear Living*

1. What is a sign gift?
2. Why were so many out-of-town people in Jerusalem?
3. Do you believe that speaking in tongues is a sign gift?
4. Peter was apparently fearless as he stood before the crowd. How do you explain the sudden change in his attitude?
5. Was having everything in common a good thing or a bad thing?
6. Did the Lord bless their commune lifestyle?
7. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?
8. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

**Question:** What are sign gifts, and why might the Lord have used a sign gift at Pentecost and during other times in the early church?

- B. Exegesis - trying to understand what the Bible is saying, trying to understand its intended meaning.
- C. Isogesis - trying to make the Bible say what someone wants it to say.
  1. Some people focus on Acts 2:1-4 without giving equal weight to Acts 2:5-8.
  2. Verses 1-4 are clearly talking about speaking in tongues.
  3. Verses 5-8 are clearly making reference to foreign languages.
- D. A sign gift is a temporary indicator from the Lord.
  1. In studying the Book of Acts, a person should focus on the message of the apostles rather than the experiences of the Apostles.
  2. ***Speaking in tongues served three purposes for the early church.***
    - a. ***It enabled many out-of-town visitors to hear the gospel preached in their own language. Because of that, many were saved.***
    - b. ***Speaking in tongues was an action that the Jews would have associated with God because they had already seen how a person acted when the Holy Spirit came upon them (see Numbers 11:25, I Samuel 10:10, I Samuel 18:10, and I Kings 22:10 among others).***
    - c. ***It provided evidence of the birth of the New Testament church.***
  3. In verses 1-8, God demonstrated His sovereignty by doing what He wanted to do.
    - a. He wanted to keep His promise about the coming Comforter.
    - b. He wanted to empower His disciples to begin His intended work of building the church.
  4. These same verses also demonstrate the biblical truth that the Lord does not predetermine who will and who will not be saved.
- E. Why were so many out-of-town people in Jerusalem?
  1. Many visitors had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost.

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- a. Pentecost was a Jewish celebration that occurred fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits.
- b. It was a Jewish celebration that would have brought most Jews to Jerusalem.
- c. God demonstrated His desire that all Jews be saved by sending the Holy Spirit at a time when most Jews would have been in Jerusalem to witness it.
  - a. This action suggests that He was not picking who would be saved and who would not.
  - b. He could have just as easily sent the Holy Spirit at a time when so many people would not have been around to see.
  - c. It was clearly God's Plan to send the Holy Spirit at a time when many people would hear the gospel in their own language.
  - d. One of the reasons that the Lord led Israel out of Egypt with a high hand was so that watching Gentiles could get saved (see II Samuel 7:23 and Joshua 2:9-12).
  - e. The Lord saved Rahab, and if they would have asked, He would have saved all of Jericho just like He spared Nineveh in Jonah 3:10.
  - f. ***It is not logical for God to go to the extreme of making some people not receive Him at the same time that He has already gone to the extreme of offering His Son on the cross so that all that receive Him can be saved. Such behavior would show an imperfect love for His creation and an equally imperfect love for His only begotten Son.***
2. Do you believe that speaking in tongues is a sign gift? Because speaking in tongues was God's way of showing the Jews His involvement with the church, a common belief among theologians is that speaking in tongues was a sign gift.

**Question:** Peter was apparently fearless as he stood before the crowd. How do you explain the sudden change in his attitude?

### II. The change in the Apostle Peter

- A. In Acts 1:15, the Apostle Peter became the leader of the early church.
  1. A little over fifty days earlier, in Matthew 26:75, Peter was weeping bitterly because he had just denied Jesus three times.
  2. Was Peter saved before he denied Jesus?
  3. Was he saved immediately after he denied Jesus?
  4. If he was saved before and after, how do you reconcile that belief with Mark 8:38, which says, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."?

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5. If he lost his salvation, then how does that belief reconcile with the belief that we are not saved (or lost) by works?
  6. Mark 8:38 expresses a lifestyle attitude. Just like Matthew 6:15, the verse is talking about a type of person rather than a specific instance. Peter was not ashamed of Jesus when he denied Him. Peter was afraid!
- B. Peter's change was the work of the Holy Spirit.
1. In Acts 1:15, the Holy Spirit had not yet indwelt Peter, but He was still directing his actions. In Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit could come upon someone for a brief period for a single purpose. Note Matthew 16:16-18 when Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah).
  2. In Acts 2:1-8, the Holy Spirit indwelt all of the disciples, and on that occasion, He came in to stay.
  3. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
- C. In Acts 2:9-13, notice that non-Jews also heard the gospel in their own language.
- D. In Acts 2:14-36, Peter preached a very powerful and very convicting sermon to the gathered people.
1. Acts 2:17 refers to the prophecy of Joel 2:28, and the Jews would have known about that prophecy.
  2. In verse 22, Peter pointed out to the people that God had approved Jesus and His message.
  3. In verse 25, Peter stated the deity of Jesus by pointing out that He existed before David.
  4. In verses 30-32, he reminded that many of them had seen the risen Jesus.
  5. In verse 36, notice Peter's bluntness --- "whom ye crucified." Peter put the blame where it belonged.
  6. In verse 41, the result was that three thousand people were saved.

**Question:** Was having everything in common a good thing or a bad thing? Did the Lord bless their commune lifestyle?

- III. The early Jerusalem church lived in a commune style.
- A. They shared everything. It was a one-for-all, all-for-one atmosphere.
- B. But did the Lord bless that way of living. The answer is NO.
1. Verse 44 says that they had all things in common.
  2. Verse 45 says that they sold their possessions and shared among themselves as someone had a need.
- C. Evidence that God did not bless that lifestyle.
1. No evidence exists to suggest that any other churches lived in communes.
  2. The practice led those people to a point of desperate poverty.

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- a. In I Corinthians 16:1-3, the Apostle Paul had instructed the Galatian and Corinthian churches to take up a love offering to help out the Jerusalem church.
- b. Romans 15:26 mentions an offering from those in Macedonia and Achaia for the Jerusalem church.
3. Such poverty is not reported among any of the other churches. They were poor in later years because they had not been wise with their money during their early church years.
- D. Nevertheless, the Lord blessed the Jerusalem church for their hard work and faithfulness in other areas. The church grew because:
  1. They continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship.
  2. They were in one accord and had a singleness of heart.
  3. They went house-to-house sharing the gospel with others.
- E. Some verses that might guide your handling of time, talent, and treasure.
  1. Matthew 22:37 says, "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."
  2. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
  3. Matthew 6:21 says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
  4. II Corinthians 9:7 says, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."
  5. I Timothy 5:8 says, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."
  6. I Corinthians 4:1-2 says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."
  7. Acts 18:3 says, "And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."
- F. ***Conclusion: The first three verses say that our giving of time, talent, and treasure should be consistent with our love for the Lord. The fourth verse says that we should give what we can give cheerfully, not that we should give and then grin and bear it. Nothing about the Christian life should involve pretending. The fifth and sixth verses remind us that we must balance our time, treasure, and talents to satisfy all of our obligations and commitments. The seventh verse tells us that the Apostle Paul worked as a tentmaker rather than be a financial burden on the churches that he was trying to start.***

**Question:** How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson? How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

IV. The Holy Spirit brought forth the beginning of the church at Pentecost.

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- A. He provided a leader in the Apostle Peter.
  - B. He indwelt believers.
  - C. He drew many people into a saving relationship with the Lord.
- V. Next week's lesson: "Soon in Trouble for Doing Good" (Acts 3:1 - Acts 4:37)