

CONCERNING THE WAY

February 9, 2010

LESSON 90: THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES



Chapter 2 Birth of the Church

In this chapter we have a pivotal event in history. The time that Jesus told the disciples about has arrived, the coming of the Holy Spirit. Yes, we can say that the Church began here in this chapter, but more accurately, this is where the New Covenant started, and the Old Covenant (the Mosaic Law) ended.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Look, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I'll make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. (32) It won't be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke my covenant, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. (33) Rather, this is the covenant that I'll make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD. "I'll put my Law within them and will write it on their hearts. I'll be their God and they will be my people. (34) No longer will a person teach his neighbor or his relative: 'Know the LORD.' Instead, they'll all know me, from the least to the greatest of them," declares the LORD. "Indeed, I'll forgive their iniquity, and I'll remember their sin no more."

Jesus ratified the New Covenant with His death and resurrection, but the coming of the Holy Spirit launched it into the world. And the New Covenant was given to Israel first (notice that Jeremiah prophecy of the New Covenant is about Israel, not the Church). But the Church benefits from it, we will see in this chapter how God's amazing plan of salvation was extended to the Gentiles. We get permanent forgiveness for sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through this covenant. And, as I've said before, this prophecy will ultimately be fulfilled by Israel in the Kingdom.

What was wrong with the Mosaic Law? Nothing, God gave it! But the problem with it was that we can't keep it. The Jews couldn't keep it, and we can't either. A system of laws and do's and don'ts cannot save us, God had to come up with a way to save us that wasn't dependent on us.

Acts 2:1 Now when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

Right off the bat we have something interesting in this verse. Most translations miss this, but the Greek word *sumplēroō*, translated as "come" in verse 1 means far more than that. It means to accomplish completely. Luke was purposely using this word to tell us that Jesus fulfilled this Jewish festival completely.

The Feast of Pentecost, or *Shavuot* in Hebrew (which means Festival of Weeks), is the anniversary of the giving of the Law to the nation of Israel and celebrates God's appearance at Mount Sinai. Since Jesus completely fulfilled the Law, you can see why Luke used this word. Pentecost is one of the "big three" festivals (like Passover and Tabernacles) where every Jewish male is commanded to worship at the temple in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16). In Deuteronomy 16:9-10 it is called the Festival of Weeks because it is counted seven weeks (or 50 days) from Passover. Pentecost means fifty in Greek. It also is called the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), because it marks the end of the barley

harvest, which began at Passover, and the beginning of the ripening of the wheat harvest.

This is the only festival that doesn't have a fixed date. It has to be figured out each year (Leviticus 23:15-16). How they determine the date has always been controversial in Judaism. The Sadducees always interpreted Leviticus 23:16 to mean that Pentecost should always fall on a Sunday. The Pharisees always disagreed with that, but that's how it is still done. So it's not on a specific date each year, but on the first Sunday fifty days from Passover.

"They were all together" is generally believed to be the 12 disciples, although it could have included other believers as well. That is because some of the things that will happen seem to be only for the apostles.

Acts 2:2-3 Suddenly a sound like a violent wind blowing came from heaven and filled the entire house where they were sitting. (3) And tongues spreading out like a fire appeared to them and came to rest on each one of them.

It was not a real violent wind, but it was a noise like a violent wind. Most believe that the phrase "the entire house" refers to the Temple courts, not the upper room where they were staying in Jerusalem, and that will make more sense as we go through this chapter. In the portico of the temple there were large columns, and groups would gather around these columns for prayer or teaching. The term "the house" was a common way to refer to the Temple, so apparently the apostles were in this area of the temple when this happened. This area, called Solomon's Portico, was a favorite spot of Jesus when He came to the temple (John 10:23), so it makes sense that the disciples continued to congregate there.

The tongues of fire represent the presence of God. Several times in the Old Testament God displayed Himself in the form of flames (Genesis 15:17; Exodus 3:2-6; 13:21-22; 19:18; 40:38). However, it doesn't appear to be real fire, because it says "like a fire". These "tongues" of fire tell us what's coming next, because one manifestation of what's happening will be about languages. The Greek word translated "tongue" here is *glossa*, whose definition is "the *tongue*; by implication a *language* (specifically one naturally unacquired)". It was language moving from one person to another like a fire spreading. The apostles began to speak in other languages like a prairie fire would spread quickly throughout the fields.

Acts 2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them that ability.

Let's clearly understand what the purpose of this gift of "tongues" was all about. Every time the word "tongue" is used in the New Testament, it means a known language or the actual organ – it never means some kind of ecstatic utterance or "prayer language". There are three times the gift of tongues are used in Acts, and every time it is used for the purpose of authenticating the apostolic message (the gospel) and the apostles themselves (also see Mark 16:17). In each case there were apostles present. We'll speak of this more as we get to each of those points.

Jewish people who knew their scriptures would have appreciated what happened here as similar to the Mount Sinai experience at the giving of the Law. There was also violent wind, fire, and supernatural sounds at that event. That's why it is so appropriate. This is the inauguration of the New Covenant, so it makes sense that elements of the beginning of Old Covenant would be present. They were both a work of God.

This was a direct fulfillment of John the Baptist's prophecy that the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit as well as with fire (Matthew 3:11). It also fulfilled Jesus' promise, given seven weeks earlier at the Last Supper, that He would send a Comforter, a Teacher (John 14:26, 16:7-15).

Even though Luke just uses the term "filled with the Holy Spirit" here, the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" also happened, because this was recognized by the disciples as a fulfillment to what John the Baptist had said (Acts 11:15-16). Those are two different terms – the filling is not the same as the baptism, they are two different ministries of the Holy Spirit.

The "Baptism" is the Holy Spirit placing us in union with Christ and His church, the "body" of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13, Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:12). Notice it's not Baptism into the Holy Spirit, but baptism BY the Holy Spirit into Christ. It is a onetime, non-repeatable event in which each new believer is supernaturally united with Jesus and joined together with every other fellow believer. This happens at the moment of every believer trusting Christ as Messiah (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 12:13). You can't make it happen or trigger it somehow. You can only receive it, it is a sovereign work of God. This is the "indwelling of the Holy Spirit."

There are three examples of the Baptism in Acts that happen in a separate time than when the believers first trusted Christ. This isn't the normal order of things – remember that there are things going on in Acts that will not be repeated. We'll discuss each event in detail when we get to it. In this case in chapter two, the disciples were already believers when the Holy Spirit came, so that's when they were baptized by the Spirit.

The "Filling" with the Holy Spirit is to be under the control of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), resulting in a lifestyle of growing spiritual maturity and also empowerment for ministry (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 31; 9:17, 13:9).

Ephesians 5:18 Stop getting drunk with wine, which leads to wild living, but keep on being filled with the Spirit.

This is a good translation (ISV) – some versions don't give you the full meaning of the Greek here by saying simply "be filled with the Spirit." The idea in the original Greek is that we must continually allow the Holy Spirit to fill us – it is not a onetime deal. It is a repeatable event (Acts 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9, 52) that both Old and new Testament believers experienced, although it was much rarer in the Old Testament (Exodus 31:3, 35:30-34, Numbers 11:26-29, 1 Samuel 10:6-10). Believers cannot generate the filling with the Spirit, but they can and should constantly yield themselves to the filling of the Spirit. It results in empowerment for effective ministry and holy living.

I cannot do any better job of explaining the Baptism and the Filling than Miles Stanford did in a booklet he wrote called "The Line Drawn":

THE BAPTISM BY THE SPIRIT

A POSITIONAL TRUTH -- The key to understanding the baptism by the Spirit is that it is a **positional** truth. It is not an experience; it has nothing to do with feelings. The baptism is an instantaneous work comprised of many simultaneous acts of the sovereign God. The following comments deal with but five of these acts which concern us here.

Observing what transpired at Pentecost we see that the first act was **regeneration**, or new birth, by the Spirit (Titus 3:5; John 3:6).

When the Holy Spirit came, He was to **indwell** the believers. Hitherto, He had been with them; now He was to abide **in** them forever, ministering the risen life of the Lord Jesus ([John 14:16, 17](#); [Colossians 1:27](#)).

At the same time, He **baptized** each of them into union with Christ at the right hand of the Father on high ([Ephesians 2:6](#)). This was the fulfillment of our Lord's promise, "*At that time you will know that I am in my Father, that you are in me, and that I am in you. John 14:20*". The believer is not baptized **in** or **into** the Spirit, as the charismatics teach. The Holy Spirit is the Baptizer, or Agent of baptism, not the element into which one is baptized: "*For by one Spirit all of us — Jews and Greeks, slaves and free — were baptized into one body and were all privileged to drink from one Spirit.*" ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#)). The "one body" is the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the Church ([Colossians 1:18, 24](#)).

Upon believing, each was **sealed** with the indwelling Spirit. This has a threefold significance: a finished transaction; a mark of ownership; a guarantee of safe delivery [security]. "*You, too, have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed in the Messiah, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until God redeems his own possession for his praise and glory.*" ([Ephesians 1:13, 14](#)).

Now the one who makes us — and you as well — secure in union with the Messiah and has anointed us is God, (22) who has placed his seal on us and has given us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Hence each believer from Pentecost to this day has been, by the Holy Spirit, regenerated, indwelt, baptized into Christ, sealed and anointed--all apart from feelings. These are separate acts, but simultaneously wrought--and non-experiential. Faith in these scriptural facts is absolutely necessary if the believer is to be invulnerable to the siren call of the charismatic claims.

The baptism by the Spirit involves more than being "immersed" into the Body of Christ. It means *to be brought into organic union with that which is capable of bringing about a change*. This baptism is the sovereign act by which the believer's *position* is changed from death in the first Adam to life in the Last Adam. The Christian becomes a completely new creation in Christ Jesus ([11 Corinthians 5:17](#)). "*Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into union with the Messiah Jesus were baptized into his death? (4) Therefore, through baptism we were buried with him into his death so that, just as the Messiah was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too may live an entirely new life.*" ([Romans 6:3, 4](#)).

CHARISMATIC ERRORS -- None of these facets of the Spirit's work were true of anyone prior to the day of Pentecost. No, not one! Charismatic teaching is that the Spirit had been previously given, and that [Acts 2:4](#) records a "second blessing." "Any error may be founded on part of Scripture; the truth alone is based on the whole." Let us examine some of the verses on which their claim is made.

[JOHN 20:22](#) -- "*When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."* By this symbolic act the Lord Jesus was preparing the disciples for the soon-coming day of Pentecost with its baptism by the Spirit. At that time they did not receive the Spirit in the full New Testament sense. "*Now he said this about the Spirit, whom those who were believing in him were to receive, because the Spirit was not yet present and Jesus had not yet been glorified.*" ([John 7:39](#)). Some time after breathing upon them, the Lord Jesus told the disciples, "*For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit a few days from now.*" ([Acts 1:5](#)). The baptism by the Spirit was still future. It was to be the first, not a second, blessing.

The Word gives no command to be baptized by the Spirit. He was given as a Gift of God, sovereignly and right on schedule--fifty days after the resurrection. It was not the disciples who asked or prayed for the Spirit, but the Lord Jesus. *"I will ask the Father to give you another Helper, to be with you always." (John 14:16).*

When was that prayer of our Lord answered? On the day of Pentecost, at which time Peter said, *"It was this very Jesus whom God raised, and of that we are all witnesses. (33) He has been exalted to the right hand of God, has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has caused you to experience what you are seeing and hearing." (Acts 2:32, 33).*

LUKE 11:13 -- *"So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who keep asking him!"* In the first place, there is no record in the Word that anyone ever did ask Him. If any had, they would have received the Spirit on the basis of the Old Testament economy. That is to say, He would have come *upon* them or temporarily indwelt them for a specific purpose, just as He did in a sovereign way with Bezaleel (Exodus 31:1-3).

ACTS 5:32 -- *"We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who keep on obeying him."* Peter was addressing the unbelieving Sanhedrin, telling them that if they obeyed God in trusting the Messiah, they would be saved and receive the Holy Spirit. In the next chapter (6:7), it is recorded that a great number of priests obeyed and were saved--they were *"obedient to the faith."* In Hebrews 5:9 there is the same principle: *"he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."* The obedience of faith brings salvation; salvation includes the gift of the Holy Spirit.

THE LINE -- The Word is very clear concerning the baptism by the Spirit. It is a once-for-all act of God, never to be repeated, asked or prayed for, nor to be subjectively experienced. The scriptural line has been drawn; there is to be no crossing over to any experience such as a subsequent "reception of the Holy Ghost", a baptism "into" Him, speaking in tongues, a "second work of grace", or "entire sanctification."

Any and all of these erroneous extras nullify the completed first work of grace by which the believer is recreated in the risen Lord Jesus Christ, fully accepted by God in all the glorious fullness of His beloved Son, and thereby made safe and secure for time and eternity.

It is on this all-important doctrine of the baptism by the Holy Spirit that the charismatics seriously err. This error is the basis for the other excesses that characterize the movement, including its stand against eternal security. Such a doctrinal lack forces them beyond the truth into the false realm of "second blessing" experience. What they lack in objective position (faith), they seek to gain by subjective condition (feelings).

By contrast, the position-oriented believer does not lack experience; his is the life-long progress of growth *"continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Messiah." (II Peter 3:18).*

THE FILLING WITH THE SPIRIT

VITAL DISTINCTION -- *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4).* The line has been drawn at Pentecost. Nowhere must this line be more fully maintained than between the baptism **by** the Spirit, and the filling **with** the Spirit. Failure at this point has compounded the charismatic errors that

are devastating so many lives today.

First of all, it is important to note that the disciples were simultaneously baptized by, and filled with, the Spirit at Pentecost. Nevertheless, these are two distinct aspects of the Spirit's work in the believer.

Having been baptized into Christ, one can never be out of Him, since this eternal position is the result of Christ's finished work on the Cross and His risen life--not our human merit or condition. Grace!

THE FILLING WITH THE SPIRIT -- On the other hand, the filling with the Holy Spirit has to do with the believer's condition--his walk. It is repeatable, and is the basis of spiritual growth and service. For example, the disciples were initially filled with the Spirit at Pentecost ([Acts 2:4](#)), but Peter was filled anew when he subsequently addressed the Sanhedrin ([Acts 4:8](#)). Still later, he and John were again filled with the Spirit ([Acts 4:31](#)).

While we find no command to be *baptized* by the Spirit, the Word very definitely does command us to "[be filled with the Spirit](#)" ([Ephesians 5:18](#)). The present tense of the verb denotes a continuous filling--a walk in, or by (in dependence upon), the Spirit.

To be filled with the Spirit is to be *controlled* by the Spirit. This control consists of His dealing with our old nature, and developing our new nature. The result of this growth is power in service, and the progressive manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit--the very characteristics of Christ who is our life ([Galatians 5:22, 23](#); [Colossians 3:4](#)).

CONDITION FOR FILLING -- For the filling with the Spirit, there is a condition. The condition is to walk in dependence upon the Spirit, rather than in dependence upon the flesh. "[So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will never fulfill the desires of the flesh.](#)" ([Galatians 5:16](#)).

Faith's Response -- What is faith's response to this exhortation? As we learn that the old nature has been condemned at the Cross, we are able to count ourselves as having died unto that old life, and as being new creations in Christ. Our reckoning upon the finished work of the Cross gives the Spirit freedom to progressively hold the old man inoperative, in the place of that death. At the same time we are also able to count ourselves as alive unto God in the risen Lord Jesus, thereby giving the Spirit freedom to develop fruit, the life of the True Vine, in our lives ([Romans 6:11](#); [John 15:5](#)).

This dual reckoning is the faith aspect of our walk in the Spirit: (a) He deals with the *old* life by means of the already accomplished death of the Cross ([Romans 6:6](#)); (b) He develops the *new* life, the divine nature, from the source of our already completed life in Christ ([Ephesians 2:10](#)).

FELLOWSHIP FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH -- The very heartbeat and foundation of our spiritual growth is increasingly to know the Lord Jesus, who is seated at the right hand of the Father. Fellowship with Him fosters the healthy process of growth: death to the old, step by step; life in the new, from glory to glory. "[I want to know the Messiah — what his resurrection power is like and what it means to share in his sufferings by becoming like him in his death](#)" ([Philippians 3:10](#)).

Inworking -- The inward development of this "[not I, but Christ](#)" life is also based on the principle of fellowship with Him. We go to the written Word, our source. We depend on the indwelling Spirit to reveal Christ, the Living Word, and we feed on Him. This vital fellowship is the means of conforming us to His likeness. "[As all of us reflect the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, we are becoming more](#)

like him with ever-increasing glory by the Lord's Spirit." (II Corinthians 3:18).

Outworking -- The outworking of these principles of growth also flows from our fellowship with the Lord Jesus. The process of development is slow, thorough, and life-long--even eternal--with no room for evasions or short-cuts. The Holy Spirit is ministering the very life of the Lord Jesus within, therefore it could not be otherwise. *"While we are alive, we are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be clearly shown in our mortal bodies. (12) And so death is at work in us, but life is at work in you." (II Corinthians 4:11, 12).*

CHARISMATIC ERRORS REGARDING GROWTH -- The above scriptural principles are absent from the present-day charismatic movement. One does not find there, the willingness to grow at the Spirit's thorough pace, nor to be taken into His process of life out of death. The focus is on a spectacular experience, and it must be received right now! When one experience "totals", another must be worked up. To the altar! On and on it goes, spinning, spinning, but ever failing to produce growth *"in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18)*. These dear people aren't even sure they're saved! This amounts to "another gospel, which is not another" (*Galatians 1:6, 7*), not really *the* Gospel which positions one in the risen Lord Jesus Christ at the Father's right hand, eternally safe and secure.

By contrast, their excitement is centered in a "Jesus" who is other than the sovereign Savior. *"However, I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by its tricks, so your minds may somehow be lured away from sincere and pure devotion to the Messiah. (4) For if someone comes along and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, or should you receive a different spirit from the one you received or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you are all too willing to listen." (II Corinthians 11:3, 4).*

THE LINE -- Many Christians who are choosing to walk in the Spirit and to accept the path of the Cross are mystified at seeing those with little or no interest in the things of the Lord, suddenly fill the scene with their enthusiasm over this new-found experience. They wonder at their claims of such supernatural gifts as the "baptism in the Holy Ghost", tongues, interpretation, prophecy, healing, casting out demons.

Ever remember the line drawn, fellow believer! Do not be tempted to cross over into the downgrade realm of experience-centered error. The positional baptism by the Spirit into our risen Lord Jesus makes Him the source of spiritual maturity and fruitful service. On the eternal foundation of that once-for-all baptism, we learn to walk in the Spirit for the experiential filling with, and manifestation of, the victorious life of our risen Lord. *"Be silent before the LORD and wait patiently for him. Don't be angry because of the one whose way prospers or the one who implements evil schemes." (Psalms 37:7).*

— *Miles Stanford, The Line Drawn*

The gift of tongues' purpose was to authenticate that God was beginning a new work of salvation, the New Covenant. It was a sign to unbelievers. There were upwards to a million people in Jerusalem for the Passover, and they came with different languages and dialects, from all over the known world – from North Africa, Syria, Greece, Rome, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Babylon, Persia, maybe even Spain. Suddenly they all began to understand the apostles in their own languages.

Do you see why God chose to do this? It would have been an amazing witness right then and there – it would have caused many to instantly believe in Jesus, just because of the fact that they were speaking in their own language. Imagine what they did when they returned home from Jerusalem and

told all of their friends and neighbors, "You won't believe what happened in Jerusalem! These people were talking about the messiah returning and that He died and then rose from the dead, and we could understand what they were saying in our language. And when we spoke to them, they understood us!" So it was like television and radio back then, it spread the gospel all over the world in a very short period of time.

So this wasn't a move of the Spirit just for show, it was a very practical method of spreading the gospel quickly. That is the purpose of the gift of tongues! It was never meant to be some sort of private prayer language, but to be used to preach the gospel. It is for the benefit of other people. That is not how the so-called gift of tongues is being used in the church today. And, this is the same miracle of tongues that is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Some try to say that the tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians is different than the tongues here in Acts, but that's just wrong. It's the very same thing, the same word that is used here. Now let's see what was happening:

Acts 2:5-6 Now devout Jews from every nation were living in Jerusalem. (6) When that sound came, a crowd quickly gathered, startled because each one heard the disciples speaking in his own language.

There were Jews from every nation! That's amazing what God did, bringing all these people here this day and doing this mighty miracle so that they would all witness His power and hear the gospel in their own language.

Acts 2:7-8 Stunned and amazed, they asked, "All of these people who are speaking are Galileans, aren't they? (8) So how is it that each one of us hears them speaking in his own native language:

The common language in Israel in that day would have been Koine Greek or Aramaic, and some spoke both, but all of these foreigners were amazed to hear them speak in their own native language. Notice that the apostles were recognized as Galileans.

Acts 2:9-11 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, (10) Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the district of Libya near Cyrene, Jewish and proselyte visitors from Rome, (11) Cretans, and Arabs, listening to them talk in our own languages about the great deeds of God?"

Proselytes were Gentiles who had believed in God and embraced Judaism. How did that happen? Well, there were Jewish synagogues in all these countries. The synagogues in many places became THE place to go to hear the news of the world, not just for Jews, but for all men in the community. Some Gentiles would go into these synagogues, hear the scriptures being taught, and would believe in the God of the Old Testament.

These three verses at first seem like an insignificant geographical list. But a line drawn from one of these names to another on a map, in the order recorded, will crisscross the Roman Empire and practically surround it. Altogether, there are seventeen different nations or ethnic groups mentioned here. This seems to be a number that has some spiritual significance as representing all the world's nations.



There is an ancient rabbinic legend in the midrash that says that when God gave the Torah to Israel at Mount Sinai, all nations throughout the world simultaneously heard God's voice in their own language. In a similar way, that morning on Mount Moriah, as Peter and the apostles preached, Jews from all the nations heard the Word of the Lord in their own languages. But that was no legend, it really happened, and explains how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire.

Acts 2:12-13 All were astounded and greatly confused, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" (13) But others jeered at the speakers, saying, "They are drunk on new wine!"

Of course there are mockers in any crowd. Everyone was astounded at what was happening, but as many recognized there was a true miracle happening right there, some scoffed at the disciples. "New", or "sweet" wine was the sweet and highly intoxicating batch of wine that had not completed the fermentation process.

Acts 2:14-15 Then Peter stood up among the eleven apostles and raised his voice to address them: "Men of Judea and everyone living in Jerusalem! You must understand something, so pay close attention to my words. (15) These men are not drunk as you suppose, for it's only nine o'clock in the morning.

Remember that the crowd here would have numbered thousands of people, from all over the Roman Empire, there in Jerusalem at the temple to worship. Like a lot of good sermons, Peter starts with a

joke! In Jewish culture, Jews waited until evening to drink alcoholic beverages.

Acts 2:16-21 Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: (17) 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. (18) In those days I will even pour out my Spirit on my slaves, men and women alike, and they will prophesy. (19) I will display wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below: blood, fire, and clouds of smoke. (20) The sun will become dark, and the moon turn to blood, before the coming of the great and glorious Day of the Lord. (21) Then whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Verses 17 and 18, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the start of the New Covenant, is fulfilled here in Acts 2, that's what Peter is saying. Then in verse 19 we have another subject, the Tribulation. Understand that Peter did not understand at that time that there is a break between verse 18 and 19, he probably assumed that since verse 17 and 18 was happening, then the rest of Joel's prophecy was soon to follow. But he quoted the whole prophecy from Joel 2:28-32. Those things prophesied in verses 19-21 have not happened yet. **The implication is that the rest of the prophecy would be fulfilled if Israel would repent.** The nation as a whole did not repent and now the rest of that prophecy has been put on hold for almost 2000 years.

Preterists like to use these verses to say, "Look, Peter said all these things happened right then, so we shouldn't expect a literal Tribulation with literal blood and fire, and shouldn't expect a literal coming Kingdom. But the entire prophecy will be fulfilled literally when the Day of the Lord comes. The fact that Peter mentions these troubling signs still to come would have been another incentive for the people listening to repent and accept Jesus as Messiah. Ezekiel also had a prophecy that referred to the coming of the Spirit:

Ezekiel 36:24-28 " 'I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries; then I will bring you to your land. (25) I will sprinkle you with pure water and you will be clean from all your impurities. I will purify you from all your idols. (26) I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh. (27) I will put my Spirit within you; I will take the initiative and you will obey my statutes and carefully observe my regulations. (28) Then you will live in the land I gave to your fathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

This prophecy, like the New Covenant prophecy, will ultimately be fulfilled in the Messianic Kingdom for the Jews, but it is beginning to happen today. More and more Jewish people are coming to Christ.

Acts 2:22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: Jesus from Nazareth was a man authenticated to you by God through miracles, wonders, and signs that God performed through him among you, as you yourselves know.

This is a very important verse. There were thousands there listening to Peter, and he said you all knew about Jesus. Jesus' life was not an obscure event, but the news about what happened to Jesus spread throughout.

Acts 2:23 After he was arrested according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified this very man and killed him by the hands of

lawless men.

What do we see taught in this verse? Yep, the sovereignty of God. It's very important that you understand that foreknowledge does not mean God looked into the future and saw that Jesus would be crucified (although He certainly did that). Many assume that meaning for the word and that is not it. To "foreknow" means to know in an intimate way. God knew every detail of what He was doing. The "you" in this verse is the Jews, the "lawless men" are the Gentiles, the Romans. **Both Jews and Gentiles are responsible for the death of Christ.**

This was God's plan, that Jesus would be crucified. He used the actions of evil men to accomplish His purpose. God not only uses good men, but He also uses evil men and angels. Does that make you uncomfortable? It's true; it's one of the clearest teachings throughout the Bible. This is why it is so ridiculous to think that any of us can run away from God's will. Men think they can be autonomous, make their own decisions, but nothing happens apart from God's sovereignty.

Everything you do ultimately plays right into the overall plan of God. This does not mean He forces people to do evil things, but he knows the decisions you will make, and He uses that volition that He has given all of us in His plans. And we are still 100% responsible for our choices. God's sovereignty should bring great comfort to us! God is not passive or wishy-washy. We wouldn't be able to trust a God like that.

Acts 2:24 But God raised him up and put an end to suffering of death, since it was impossible for him to be held by it.

Here's another loaded verse. God put an end to the suffering of death not just for Jesus, but for all of us who have trusted Him for salvation. We do not have to fear death any more. We have passed from death to life, because of Christ's resurrection. Death no longer has power over us, it is just a transition into eternal life with God.

Acts 2:25-28 For David says about him, 'I always keep my eyes on the Lord, for he is at my right hand so that I cannot be shaken. (26) That is why my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices, yes, even my body still rests securely in hope. (27) For you will not abandon my soul to Hades or allow your Holy One to experience decay. (28) You have made the ways of life known to me, and you will fill me with gladness in your presence.'

This is from Psalm 16:8-11. Peter recognizes that David said these words, but they are not about David, but about Jesus Christ. He was speaking a prophecy, saying the words of Jesus. Jesus' body died, but not one cell started to decay before His body was resurrected. Why? Because He had never sinned! Sin is why we age, get sick, and die.

Acts 2:29-31 "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and that his tomb is among us to this day. (30) Therefore, since he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him with an oath to put one of his descendants on his throne, (31) he looked ahead and spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah: 'He was not abandoned to Hades, and his flesh did not experience decay.'

He is confirming to the people that this passage was not about David, but about Jesus. Anyone in that day could have gone right down the road and visited David's tomb. It was destroyed by the Romans in the sack of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and we still don't know exactly where the tomb was located, just the

general area. But David prophesied that one of his descendants would be resurrected and sit on his throne. This is something that must happen in reality in the future. To fulfill this prophecy Jesus must actually sit on David's throne in Jerusalem and rule Israel. He has not done that yet. That's the future Kingdom, folks!

Acts 2:32-33 "It was this very Jesus whom God raised, and of that we are all witnesses. (33) He has been exalted to the right hand of God, has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has caused you to experience what you are seeing and hearing.

Peter says that this descendant of David is Jesus and that they had all witnessed His resurrection. Then he makes his point, that Jesus, now sitting at the right hand of God, has sent the Holy Spirit, just as He promised, and that's what the people were seeing and hearing. God is what's causing all of this.

Acts 2:34-35 For David did not go up to heaven, but he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, (35) until I make your enemies your footstool."

Again Peter is saying that David in the Psalms passages (this is from Psalm 110:1) is talking about Jesus, not himself, because David did not come back to life and then rise to heaven, only Jesus did that. All Jews understood that this verse in the Psalms referred to the Messiah, but they could really understand the full meaning of what David was saying.

This is where the English translation of Lord is so unfortunate. The first "Lord" in this quoted Psalm is the Hebrew word "YHWH", (where we get the name Yahweh), and refers to the covenant making God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The second "Lord" is the Hebrew "adonai". This is the person David is calling "my Lord". So if neither of these two persons is David, then who is the second Lord? Jesus Himself asked this question of the Pharisees in Matthew 22:41-46. They couldn't answer Him. But Peter had the answer:

Acts 2:36 "Therefore, let all the people of Israel understand beyond a doubt that God made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!"

Peter wraps up this great sermon by making sure they understand that Jesus is the Messiah that David referred to in the scriptures, He is "David's Lord". His point is that they should be calling on the Lord Jesus for salvation.

Acts 2:37-38 When the crowd that had gathered heard this, they were pierced to the heart. They asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" (38) Peter answered them, "Every one of you must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

"Repent", in Greek, means to "change one's mind". But in Hebrew, which Peter was probably speaking, it means completely turning yourself around, a reorientation of your perspective. In this case, it meant that these people needed to reorient their perspective about Jesus. They needed to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. That is the way repentance is used throughout Acts, it is changing your perspective to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. That is the sole New Testament requirement for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 3:19, 5:31, 8:22, 10:43-44, 11:19, 13:24,

17:30, 19:4, 20:21, 26:18-20, John 3:16, 36, Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:8-9).

I know this might surprise some people, because they were taught to believe that they had to be sorry for their sins before they can be saved. Well, repentance can mean that, but for many that doesn't come until they truly understand what their sins are, which doesn't come until you understand who Jesus is and change your mind about Him. Make sense? The fact is the Bible teaches that believing that Jesus is the crucified and risen Messiah is the only requirement to being saved. **This belief is true repentance, and it should cause remorse for your sin and a change, even if it's gradual, in how you live.** There is also a continual repentance needed in the Christian life in relation to specific sins (2 Corinthians 7:9; Revelation 2:5) and a repentance that has nothing to do with salvation (Matt. 21:28-30).

Peter then called for those who repented to be baptized. So this wasn't the kind of service where at the end the pastor would ask everyone to close their eyes and if anyone wanted to be saved to slip their hands up. No, this was the most public way of proving their repentance. It would identify them with Jesus, and disassociate them with the Jewish leadership that had rejected Him. And there would have been multiple public pools just outside the temple where the baptisms could be performed, right then. Archeologists estimate that there were as many as two hundred of these baptismal pools at the foot of the temple mount.

The grammatical construction of verse 38 is complicated and has led to differences in opinion as to whether or not water baptism is necessary for forgiveness of sin. Some believe that's what the passage is saying, that it is necessary. However, that would make salvation a result of works – something we have to do to get it. That is supported nowhere else in the New Testament and would contradict all of the verses I just gave above. It makes more sense to understand that Peter was saying that we're to be baptized because of, or as a result of, our sins being forgiven. This jives with all the other verses in the Bible that teach salvation by faith alone. We don't have time to go through all the details of the Greek text here, but it is reasonable to paraphrase this verse, "Repent for the forgiveness of your sins, and be baptized."

Acts 2:39 For this promise belongs to you and your children, as well as to all those who are distant, whom the Lord our God may call to himself."

The promise is the promise of the Holy Spirit, and it is available to all who trust in Christ (the ones whom God calls to Himself), not just those who are on a higher plane spiritually. All who trust in Christ for salvation receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:40-41 Using many different expressions, Peter continued to testify and to plead with them, saying, "Be saved from this corrupt generation!" (41) So those who welcomed his message were baptized. That day about 3,000 people were added to their number.

Verse 40 tells us that this was probably just an excerpt of Peter's full sermon. Peter wasn't just warning the people to be saved from eternal damnation, though that's definitely implied, but to be saved from the cataclysmic judgment that was coming upon the nation. It's similar to what John the Baptist's message was, who warned of the "wrath to come" (Matthew 3:7). Jesus warned also of the coming judgment on the specific generation of Israel which had rejected Him (Luke 11:50-51, Matthew 23:35-36). This was a powerful message and resulted in a huge response. Now that is a revival meeting!

Acts 2:42-47 The believers continued to devote themselves to what the apostles were teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to times of prayer. (43) A sense of fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. (44) All the believers were united and shared everything with one another. (45) They made it their practice to sell their possessions and goods and to distribute the proceeds to anyone who was in need. (46) United in purpose, they went to the temple every day, ate at each other's homes, and shared their food with glad and humble hearts. (47) They were praising God and enjoying the good will of all the people. Every day the Lord was adding to their number those who were being saved.

Many Christians hold this passage up as an example to what a church should be today. Some of these things we should certainly strive for, but remember that Acts is a book of transition. You cannot take everything you see in the early church and expect that's how it should be today. For one thing, we don't have true apostles like these doing true wonders and signs any more. Notice that they continued to go to the temple *every day*. They didn't stop being Jews. As Gentiles we cannot fully relate to this.

They sold their possessions and distributed the proceeds to anyone who was in need. The "anyone" should be understood as fellow believers who were in need. This is Biblical common-ism, not communism, and is certainly appropriate for believers to do today – not forced or coerced by church leadership, but on a voluntary basis. It doesn't mean they discouraged private ownership, they just shared what they had with each other. They were not experiencing persecution yet, and they probably expected Jesus to return and establish His kingdom very soon, which may have made it easier to give up some of those earthly possessions.

Apparently this practice was just confined to this early group of believers in Jerusalem, because we don't read about it in any other church in the Bible, or in any of the early church fathers' writings. As Christianity moved out of Jerusalem, and especially out of Palestine itself, the believing Jews could relate themselves to the Gentile world economically and socially. Then there was no more need for communal life. They were generous in their giving, but only occasionally was money needed again to keep Christians from starving because of ostracism by other Jews. The point here is that these believers valued each other over their earthly possessions, and that is certainly something for us to emulate!

The apostles, those who had been with Jesus, were among them, and so they had incredible unity of purpose. It was a wonderful time, a very unique time that will never be repeated. This is not to say we shouldn't make some of these things our goals for today's churches. Verse 42 tells us what is important about gathering together as believers. **We should devote ourselves to studying the Bible (the teachings of the apostles), fellowship with each other (involvement and sharing in each other's lives), practicing the Lord's Supper, and having times of prayer.** That's it, folks, that's church! Nothing else should take precedence over these things.

Verse 47 says the Lord added to their number. The believers didn't hire a great band and play popular music to get people to come. They didn't advertise in the local paper. They didn't have great "programs" for the kids so their parents would feel comfortable coming. They didn't preach sermons that didn't offend anyone. They studied the Bible, loved each other, and prayed. And God brought more people to them.