

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Part Two in a Series of Ten



2. The Birth Of The Church

THE RISE OF THE CHURCH

'caring for **PEOPLE** for **PEOPLE** matter to God' Romans 5:8

FOR FORTY DAYS HE APPEARED TO THE DISCIPLES

THE NEED FOR CERTAINTY

1. They executed Jesus Christ but he came to life, never to die again. And for forty days, on and off, he appeared to the disciples. He ate with them and taught them much concerning the kingdom of God. He opened their minds, Luke tells us (Luke 24:45), so they could understand the Scriptures he was teaching them.
2. They were to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit which the Father had promised (Acts 1:4-5). Given power by the Spirit they were to spread the message of the resurrected Lord from Jerusalem to Judaea to Samaria and then to the whole wide world (Acts 1:8).
3. And then the Lord was taken up from them with the assurance that as surely as he went, he would return just as they saw him go (1: 11). They returned to Jerusalem where they, with over a hundred other disciples, met to pray and set some things in order as they waited for the Spirit's arrival (1:14-26).

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

4. The birth of the Church took place at the temple! After the ascension, Luke 24:53, says of the apostles: 'And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God'. That's where we find them in Acts 2. In chapter 1 we were told of a meeting which took place in an upper room but it's clear that Acts 2 takes place in one of the houses of the temple. A great multitude (of at least 3,000 people) couldn't have gotten into an upper room.

THERE WAS A SOUND LIKE A STORMY WIND

5. **The birthday of the Church was the day of Pentecost!** A feast day of the Jews. Jews who spoke Greek called it Pentecost and it always fell on a Sunday. In the Old Testament it is also called the feast of Firstfruits (Numbers 28:26). It was the beginning of a new season and the people brought the best of their first fruits and offered them to God in thanksgiving. Involved in the Pentecost (Firstfruits) offering was the idea of 'there's more to Come'. God would provide the rest of the harvest and the people would regard that also as having come from the goodness of God.
6. **The birth of the Church was signalled by miraculous events!** Three things occurred and they all bore witness to the same thing. There was the sound like a stormy wind which came from the sky (Acts 2:2) filled the whole place where they were. Then there were what looked like tongues of flame (2:3), dividing themselves and resting on each disciple. And men began to speak and magnify God in languages and dialects not known to them (2:4, 6, 8, 11).
7. Again and again and again in Scripture **wind** signals the presence and work of God! Ezekiel 37:9-10,14 is an especially graphic use of wind to speak of God and his Spirit at work. Nicodemus in John 3:1-9 found a second birth difficult to swallow – after all it was invisible. As surely as the wind is real though invisible, taught the Christ, so a man's birth of the Spirit is real though invisible. **The wind in Acts 2 speaks of the presence and work of the Spirit of God!**

THE FIRE DIVIDED AND RESTED ON EACH DISCIPLE

8. Again and again and again in Scripture **fire** signals the presence and work of God! Among many texts, Exodus 40:33-38 is helpful.

When the Tabernacle was completed God indicated his dwelling there by coming down on it. During the day it was cloud and at night there was a pillar of fire. When Solomon dedicated the temple (see 2 Chronicles 7:1-3) we read: 'The glory of the Lord filled the house...and all the children of Israel looked on, when the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord was upon the house...' In both cases (the tabernacle and temple) God symbolised his sanctifying presence by fire.

9. In Acts 2 we have a new temple begun. One not made with hands. The Church! In this case the fire divides and rests on each person. We are being told that God wishes not only to dwell in the new Temple as a whole but that he wishes to dwell in each individual. See this distinction in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19 where we're told that the Spirit not only dwells in Christians as a body, he dwells in each individual Christian.

10. The fire and the wind symbols were supernatural signs of the Spirit's presence and so was the speech these people uttered. It was clearly noted that these men were Galileans (Acts 2:7) but they were speaking foreign languages, many foreign languages. How do you explain such a thing? Neither Luke nor Peter has any doubt. They were doing it because the Spirit had come upon them (2:4,16). And what did the Spirit lead them to do? To glorify the wonderful works of God (2:11). So, in the languages and dialects (both words are used) of many different areas, uneducated Galileans were praising God and in this way were giving a sign to unbelievers that God was present (see 1 Corinthians 14:22).

THESE WORKS WEREN'T DONE IN SOME FAR OFF LAND

THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH

11. The scoffers talked of drunkenness (2:13) no doubt because these men spoke in many languages the hearers didn't understand. Though it was silly, Peter wouldn't let the remark pass but claimed what happened was in fulfilment of Joel 2:28-32. From there he goes on to preach the first message of good news in the name of the once dead but now living, Jesus Christ. (The Church has no message of her own!)

12. He appeals to common knowledge! He tells of the man Jesus Christ who was approved of God (2:22) by miracles and signs and wonders. These works weren't done in some far off land but in the very presence of many of his hearers. Peter insists on this! What he was saying they knew to be true. They knew also how he was given to the Romans by his own people (2:23). He explains that strange situation by revealing that God purposed it.

13. He appeals to Scripture! Not only does he appeal to Joel, Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 and Psalm 110:1. When David spoke of not seeing corruption, said Peter in 2:29, he wasn't speaking of himself – he was speaking of Jesus Christ. The proof of that was twofold: 1) David had died and saw corruption, and, 2) Jesus had died but had not seen corruption because God raised him from the dead to sit on David's throne!

GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD TO SIT ON DAVID'S THRONE

14. He appeals to personal experience! The disciples were witnesses of the truth that God had raised Jesus from the dead! They had seen him! Ate with him! Were taught by him! Over a forty-day period! Christ was alive after having been dead!

15. And he appeals to their personal experience! They heard the sound like a stormy wind which boomed out in this temple-house, they saw the fire-like tongues dividing and resting on each of them and they heard Galilean peasants speak in languages they couldn't possibly have known without God's intervention (see 2:33).

THE RESPONSE

16. About three thousand people were now convicted (2:37,41). They've sinned against God in rejecting Jesus. How can they right things? What must they do? they ask (2:37). If they want forgiveness of sins, says Peter, 'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven' (2:38). By repentance and baptism, they take on them the name of the Christ they have rejected and their sins are forgiven. And that's not all, they too will be given the Holy Spirit as God's gift because the promise of the Spirit isn't to a select few, it's for all who turn to God in Jesus Christ (2:38,39).

BY REPENTANCE AND BAPTISM, THEY TAKE ON THEM THE NAME OF CHRIST

17. Three thousand were thrilled to receive that message and were baptised so that their sins would be forgiven (2:41). These were sinful but now repentant people who were baptised. Adults who had rejected the Christ and who now wished to take his name upon them. Who now wished to personally acknowledge as Lord the one whom God had made Lord and Christ (2:36,38).

18. And in being baptised in his name they were forgiven and added to the believing Community, the Church (2:38,47). Recognising the apostles to be the authorised witnesses of the risen Lord and seeing the signs of apostleship worked by them (2:43 and 2 Corinthians 12:12), they ongoingly sought to be taught by them (2:42). They prayed together, shared their new found joy and 'broke the bread' (partook of the Lord's Supper) together.

19. In their new found joy and deepened relationship they gladly shared their goods with those who had nothing. People earlier divided to some degree by differing languages were now united in one Body under the Messiah. **The Church was the new form of the People of God!**

The Birth Of The Church

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED IN PART TWO

- The resurrected Lord spent nearly six weeks with his disciples before he departed to send the Spirit! **Acts 1:1-5.**
- The birth of the Church and the presence of the Spirit was signalled by the miraculous events which happened on that Pentecost day! **Acts 2:33.**
- On the day the Church was born about 3,000 repentant adults were baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. **Acts 2:38,41.**
- The early Church recognised the apostles as the source of truth regarding Jesus Christ and his teaching. **Acts 2:42.**

EVALUATION SHEET

Please go ahead and fill in the evaluation sheet attached.

CONTACT DETAILS

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EVALUATION SHEET

Acts LESSON 2

(Please type or write your answers within the lines provided)

Name:

Home Address or Email address:

TRUE OR FALSE? (If the statement is true write T, if false write F.)

1. On the Church's birthday about 3,000 adults were baptised for the remission of their sins! _____
2. The 'other tongues' of Acts 2 were actually gibberish and not languages! _____
3. In Scripture, fire often signals the presence of God! _____
4. After the resurrection, Christ spent about fifty days with the apostles! _____
5. Pentecost is another name for the feast of Firstfruits! _____
6. Some people said they thought the apostles were drunk! _____
7. Wind is often used to signify God is at work! _____
8. The new Christians ignored the apostle's teaching after they became the disciples of Christ! _____
9. In his preaching, Peter made a strong appeal to Old Testament prophecy! _____
10. The Holy Spirit was promised to everyone who took Christ's name on them! _____

WHO?

1. Found a 'second birth' hard to swallow? _____
2. Said the apostles stayed continually at the temple praising God? _____
3. Said Jesus Christ was approved by God by miracles and signs and wonders? _____
4. Asked what they must do to find forgiveness? _____
5. Said Christ opened the minds of the apostles so they could understand the scriptures? _____
6. Prophesied of the coming of the Spirit on all flesh? _____
7. In a psalm spoke of someone not seeing corruption? _____
8. Prayed together and broke bread together? _____

PUT A TICK NEXT TO THE SCRIPTURES WHEN YOU'VE READ THEM:

1. Acts 1:4-8 _____
2. Acts 2:1-4 _____
3. Ezekiel 37:9-10,14 _____
4. 2 Chronicles 7:1-3 _____
5. Acts 2:29-42 _____
6. Luke 24:45-49 _____

COMPLETE THIS STATEMENT: (As found in the booklet.)

1. Again and again and again in Scripture wind _____
2. He tells of the man Jesus Christ _____
3. So, in the languages and dialects (both words are used) _____
4. Three thousand were thrilled to _____
5. When David spoke of not seeing _____
6. In their new found joy _____
7. In both cases (the tabernacle) _____
8. They were to wait in Jerusalem _____

SENDING YOUR ANSWERS

Once we have received your evaluation sheet we will send you the next study in this series.

Please return your completed evaluation sheet as an email attachment to info@the-scriptures.co.uk