

# **The Acts of the Apostles**

## **LESSON 7-8**

# Lessons 7-8

## Chapter 2

### **The Holy Spirit Descended (Acts 2:1-4)**

*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

### **The Holy Spirit descended according to God's timetable.**

#### **It was on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1).**

Pentecost is the Greek name for a Jewish feast. It is a transliterated word meaning "fiftieth." The Hebrew "Feast of Weeks" or "Day of the First Fruits" as it was called, came seven weeks after Passover. It was one of the three great annual festivals held in Jerusalem, the other two being Passover and Tabernacles. All males, no matter where in the world they lived, were required by law to attend these feasts (Ex. 34:22-23). Consequently, the city of Jerusalem was filled with devout Jews on this day of Pentecost. It was Sunday, fifty days (counted inclusively) after the day of Passover.

In the days of the apostles, it was the most numerous attended of all the Jewish feasts since the dangers of travel (especially by sea) during the early spring and late autumn prevented many from coming to either the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles.

#### **It was the actual fulfillment of Pentecost (Acts 2:1). Verse one could also be translated, "When the Day of Pentecost was being fulfilled..."**

This Pentecost was a manifestation of God's timetable or God's fullness of time. Just as there had been a fullness of time for the birth of Christ (Gal 4:6) and a fullness of time for the death of Christ (John 7:6-8), there was now a fullness of time for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

This Pentecost would be different from all other Pentecost's just as the previous Passover had been different from all other Passovers. This Pentecost would be the reality to which all of the Old Testament shadows pointed. This was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies.

#### **It was foreshadowed by the first Pentecost or fiftieth day experience that took place at Sinai.**

To better understand what was happening here, it is good to see what happened on the first Pentecost at Sinai. It should be noted that this event was not yet called "Pentecost" because there had been no giving of the law yet. But it is significant that it did occur 50 days after the first Passover.

The initial giving of the law occurred on the 50th day from the original Passover. The children of Israel left Egypt on the 15th day of the first month. There were 15 days left in the month. When you add another 30 days for the second month the total comes to 45 days from Passover. They arrived at Sinai on the first day of the third month making the total 46 days (Ex. 19:1). Moses waited for three days for the people to be sanctified bringing the total to 49 days (Ex. 19:10-11). On the 50th day, God began to write (Ex. 20:1).

The Law was given on tables of stone (Ex. 31:18). While in the New Covenant the law is written on the tables of our heart (Rom. 2:15; II Cor. 3:3).

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. II Corinthians 3:2-3

There were supernatural manifestations of God's power including thunder, lightning, thick clouds, fire, windstorm, smoke and the sound of a trumpet (Ex. 19:16-19; Heb. 12:18-19).

*Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thundering and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Exodus 19:16-19*

The Law was written by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18). In the New Testament Jesus identified the finger of God as the Spirit of God (Compare Mt. 12:28 and Luke 11:20).

*And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. Exodus 31:18*

Three thousand were slain because of the disobedience of the people when the law was being given (Ex. 32:28). In the New Covenant three thousand were given new life by the obedience of faith (Acts 2:41).

*So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. Exodus 32:28*

It was an appropriate day in every respect. As the day when a cosmopolitan assembly was gathered in Jerusalem, it provided a tremendous opportunity for the first great dissemination of the Gospel. As the day of the first fruits of the grain harvest, it was a suitable one for the conversion of the three thousand, the first fruits of a greater harvest yet to be gathered in. As the day which spoke of the going forth of the great Law from Sinai, it was a fitting one for the first great going forth of the Gospel from Jerusalem (Is. 2:2-3).

*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

## **The Holy Spirit descended on those who were positioned to receive.**

They were all assembled in one place. It is most likely that this was now an apartment in the Temple and not the upper room where they had previously gathered, for the following reasons:

The circumstances of preaching to thousands would not lend itself to this taking place in a private residence. Whereas all the twelve needed to do in the temple apartment, which faced the temple area, was to turn to the patio side of the apartment, and there would be the very large temple area which would easily accommodate such a crowd.

Since this was a great feast day for the Jews and the temple was the headquarters for the celebration it would not seem logical that the apostles would be in their homes on such an occasion.

Luke says, "They were continually in the temple blessing God!" (Luke 24:53). What more appropriate time to be in the temple worshipping God than upon this great day of the Feast of First fruits. The group either consisted of the 120 of Acts 1:15 or the eleven plus Matthias from Acts 1:26. It was most likely the larger group.

There is something about the corporate gathering of God's people that sets a stage for God to move. They experienced many things together in this chapter.

- They were all assembled (v. 1).
- They were all filled (v. 4).
- They all preached (v. 7, 17).
- They were all witnesses (v. 32).
- They all shared their possessions (v. 44).

They were in unity of mind and purpose.

## **The Holy Spirit descended accompanied by supernatural signs.**

Notice how verse 2 begins, "And suddenly..." Even though they were waiting for it and expecting it, it came suddenly. This is often the way God works. It seems like the promises are delayed in being fulfilled. Then, suddenly, God begins to move, and we find it difficult to keep up with Him.

There was a supernatural sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2). God announced His feast with a supernatural sound. When He comes again, the trumpet sound will

precede Him.

There was no actual wind on this occasion, only the sound of a rushing, mighty wind. The Greek words used for this phrase include the following:

- Phromenes, which means driving or rushing (See Acts 27:15; II Pet. 1:21).
- ...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. II Peter 1:20-21
- Pnon, which mean breath, wind, a blowing or a blast of air.

Biaios, which means violent.

Literally, “a sound as of a mighty blast of air driven along.”

Wind is one of the biblical symbols of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 37:9-14; John 3:8). In the Old Testament, the mighty power of God is also denoted by the violence of a mighty tempest or wind (I Kgs. 19:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3).

Note that they were sitting when all of this happened. God is not limited. He can even move while we are sitting. I can just picture the disciples standing and singing and kneeling and praying, doing everything they can to “bring the Holy Spirit down.” Finally, when they are exhausted of all their efforts, they “sit down” and then the Holy Spirit comes.

*There appeared a supernatural manifestation of fire. It is worthy of note that this is something that they both heard and saw, making them true witnesses (I John 1:3).*

Fire has always been associated with God (Gen. 15:17; Ezek. 1:4; Ps. 18:12-14). Fire came down on the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Solomon and now it comes on the Church. The appearance of fire or flame has always been regarded as a most striking emblems of deity. It is a symbol of God’s holiness, purifying, cleansing, and warming His people. Other places where God is associated with fire include:

- The cherubim and flaming sword kept the gate to Eden (Gen. 3:24).
- Moses stood before the burning bush from which God spoke (Ex. 3:3).
- God descended on Mt. Sinai in the midst of thunder, lightning and fire (Ex. 10:16-20).
- God is called a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29).
- God manifest Himself to the children of Israel as a pillar of fire (Num. 14:14).

This fire is the same holy fire that fell at the dedication of two Old Testament sanctuaries (See: Lev. 9:23-24; II Chr. 7:1-3). The fire speaks to me of the Shekinah glory of God or that supernatural manifestation of God’s presence which now filled the New Testament sanctuary on its day of dedication even as it had filled all the other typical sanctuaries in days past.

*And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. Leviticus 9:23-24*

*When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever." II Chronicles 7:1-3*

This fire seems to have first appeared as a large mass (Acts 2:3). The phrase translated "divided tongues" literally means "distributing tongues." Other translations include:

- Tongues parting asunder... --ASV
- Tongues of what appeared to be flame, separating, so that one settled on each of them. --TCNT
- Tongues like flames that were distributed and that settled on each one of them. --Berkley
- These tongues being distributed among them, and one of these tongues took up a position upon each of them. --Wuest

Literally the phrase would be translated, "Tongues like as of fire, distributing themselves." The sense of this expression implies that from one flame there was a distributing of individual flames upon each one. This is a graphic picture of what was taking place in the spirit realm. Jesus had ascended on high and now He was gifting His spiritual body with elements of His ministry (Eph. 4:7-16; I Cor. 12:11).

*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men"...11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers... Ephesians 4:7-8, 11*

The fire distributed itself over each of them in the form of a "tongue of fire." Anything long, narrow, and tending to a point was called a tongue in the Hebrew and Greek. The word here means, therefore, slender and pointed appearances of flame.

There was a supernatural impartation of speech—speaking with unknown languages. Note the progression in the Bible relative to languages:

The Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-10) - Here we have the origin of diverse tongues. The change in languages here was a sign of God's judgment on mankind for disobedience and idolatry.

Pentecost (Acts 2:4) - Here the effects of Babel are reversed. God gave the sign of tongues as a sign

of grace. It came as a result of obedience, and it came as a blessing.

Heaven (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9) - Every kindred, nation, tribe, and tongue will be united in praise to the Lamb.

#### The Crowd Responded (Acts 2:5-13)

*And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." 12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" 13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."*

The crowd consisted of devout Jews representing many nations of the world (Acts 2:9- 11). These were devout people (Acts 2:5). That is, they were people who were still very conscientious about their celebration of the God ordained feasts.

The term is applied to those who are cautious about offending God and who are careful to observe His commandments. It is a general expression to denote pious or religious men (Acts 8:2; Luke 2:25). The English word "devout" means "yielding a solemn reverential attention to God in religious exercises, particularly in prayer; pious, sincere, solemn" (Webster).

It is interesting that it would be those who did not slack off during the silent years or the dry times that would be the first to receive Pentecost. Most of these were Jews who had been born in other nations (Acts 2:5). Notice the nations that were represented:

- Parthians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived, or were living in Parthia, a mountainous land southwest of the Caspian Sea (modern Iran). It was a part of the Persian Empire and later became an independent empire between the Euphrates and Indus Rivers.
- Medes - Men of Jewish descent or religion, who had lived or were living in Media, the land that was situated north of Parthia and south of the Caspian Sea. It was about the size of Spain and was one of the richest parts of Asia.
- Elamites - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Elam, a land lying east of Babylonia and southwest of Media, whose capital was Susa. It was the eastern part of Iraq. This nation was descended from Elam, the son of Shem (Gen. 10:22).
- Mesopotamians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Mesopotamia, the territory lying between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, the modern eastern Syria and northern Iraq.

- Judeans - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Judea. In this case it would very likely include all of Palestine (see 1:24).
- Cappadocians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Cappadocia, the Roman province, created in 17 A.D., extending from Lake Tatta on the west to the Euphrates on the east, and from the Taurus mountains on the south to Pontus on the north. It was the eastern part of modern Turkey.
- Pontusians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Pontus, the territory lying east of the Halys River along the southern shore of the Black Sea.
- Asians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in the Roman province in western Asia comprising Mysia, Lydia, Caria and the greater portion of Phrygia.
- Phrygians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Phrygia which originally consisted of the whole central part of Asia Minor.
- Pamphylans - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Pamphylia, also part of Asia Minor.
- Egyptians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Egypt.
- Libyans - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Libya or that part of northern Africa which lies between the province of Africa on the west, and Egypt on the east, stretching approximately six hundred miles along the southern Mediterranean coast (Cyrene was a city in the western portion of the province).
- Sojourning Romans - Although most of the time the term “Romans” is used in the Book of Acts to mean Roman citizens, here it means Jews of Rome.
- Cretans - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living on the island of Crete which was situated sixty miles south of Greece.
- Arabians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Arabia, the area south of the Dead Sea.

When you plot all these nations on a world map you see how extensive this first encounter with the Gospel would be in relation to the world.

The crowd was confused by what they heard (Acts 2:6). They were confounded, amazed or bewildered. This is the exact word used in the Septuagint regarding the tower of Babel experience when God confounded or confused the language of mankind (Gen. 11:9).

*Therefore, its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the*



*earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.*

Why were they confused? They were confused because of an unusual sound. This sound was different than the sound in the upper room (the sound of wind).

The word that is used for “sound” here is a different word in the Greek (phone) than the word in verse two and is usually rendered, “voice or utterance.” It occurs over 140 times in the New Testament and is translated “voice” in all but seven instances. The most natural interpretation is that the sound that attracted the attention of the multitudes was a miraculous voice or utterance.

This sound was the “speaking with other tongues” by the apostles. In this case it appears to have been speaking in languages that were known to the world but unknown to the speakers (I Cor. 13:1).

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*

This speaking was not the same as Peter’s preached message which was most likely in the language common to all. This speaking was summarized as “speaking...the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11).

They were confused because they heard them not in the Hebrew or Aramaic language, but in the languages of their birth nations (Acts 2:6). This was most likely the case of various disciples speaking in various languages, each person speaking one. The word “language” used here corresponds to our word “dialect” and is used only in the Book of Acts (1:19, 2:8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14).

They were confused because those doing the speaking were Galileans. It was remarkable that they should speak in this manner because: Galileans were proverbially ignorant, rude and uncivilized (John 1:46). The term “Galilean” was used as an expression of deepest contempt and reproach (Mark 14:70; John 7:52).

*And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” John 1:46*

*They answered and said to him, “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.” John 7:52*

Galileans were regarded as outlandish people, unacquainted with other nations and languages. Their dialect was considered barbarous and corrupt. The people were amazed that they could address them in the refined language of other people (Mt. 26:73).

*And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, “Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.”*

The members of the crowd reacted in different ways (Acts 2:12-13). All of us react to new things. However, there are good reactions and bad reactions.

- Some were amazed (existami). This word means “to throw out of position, to throw into

wonderment, astonish or astound.”

- Some were perplexed (diaporeo). This word means “to be entirely at a loss.” They had no context for what was happening. They could not understand or explain what was going on. They could not explain what they were seeing rationally.
- Some mocked them (xieuazontes). This word means “to deride or jeer at”. This is a most dangerous reaction to the moving of the Holy Spirit. This particular word occurs but one other time in the New Testament. It describes how the Athenians reacted when Paul spoke of the resurrection of the dead (Acts 17:32). God will treat men as they treat Him (Ps. 18:26; see also Pro. 1:24-26).

In the Book of Acts we see a progression of opposition against the apostles:

- From mocking
- To questioning (4:7)
- To threatening (4:17)
- To imprisonment (5:18)
- To blows (5:40)
- To murder (7:58)

Some felt that they were drunk with wine (Acts 2:13).

When the Holy Spirit comes upon people, He causes many of the effects of wine (without producing a hangover or the regret):

- Refreshes (Tit. 3:5)
- Stimulates (II Pet. 1:21)
- Produces joy (Rom. 14:17; I Th. 1:6)
- Induces singing (Eph. 4:18-19)
- Helps to forget trouble (Pro. 31:6)
- Produces unusual actions (Acts 2:1-2)
- Cleanses and heals (Luke 10:34)
- Induces visions (Acts 2:17)
- Produces boldness (Acts 4:31)

*Peter’s response was, “These are not drunk as you suppose...” (Acts 2:15).*

### **Peter Preached to the Crowd (Acts 2:14-41)**

Peter, who seems to have risen to the place of spokesman for the Twelve, rose to the occasion. Notice the change in Peter from his previous denial. The baptism of the Spirit seems to have had a powerful effect on all the disciples.

Peter assured the people that the state of the disciples is not due to wine.

Peter answers the charge of drunkenness and argues that it was only the third hour (9:00 a.m.). This charge of drunkenness was not reasonable because:

- It was the hour of morning worship, and thus highly improbable that they would be intoxicated by that time.
- It was unusual even for drunkards to get drunk in the daytime (I Th. 5:7).
- It was a regular practice with the Jews not to eat or drink anything until after the third hour of the day (prayer time), especially on the Sabbath or feast days.

Peter based their new experience with the Holy Spirit and his message on the word (Acts 2:16-21). Peter drew upon a prophecy from the Book of Joel. What happened here was not a literal fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. The fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel began with Peter and the Apostles but it continues throughout the last days, culminating in the signs in the heavens prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Peter's message focused on Jesus (Acts 2:22-26).

The heart of the message involved who Jesus was. Peter spoke of:

- His sinlessness (v. 22).
- His life and ministry (v. 22).
- His crucifixion (v. 23).
- His resurrection (v. 24-25).
- His exaltation (v. 33).
- His ascension (v. 34).
- His enthronement (vs. 34-35).
- His glorification (v. 34-36).

Peter's message reflected a great deal of understanding about Christ's death, burial, resurrection and exaltation. It probably reflects much of what Jesus shared with them during the 40 days. It also reflects that Peter was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and was receiving revelation while he was speaking. This is truly "prophetic preaching."

Peter explained what was happening in the heavenly realm (Acts 2:33-36). Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Jesus was exalted at the right hand of God. Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father. Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on the waiting disciples. God established Jesus as both Lord

and Christ.

The two titles, Lord and Christ, contain, in embryo, much of what the Christian church came to understand of the exalted nature of Jesus. The title “Lord” was an accepted title for God in the Old Testament times, and the term “Christ” was the equivalent of Messiah or Anointed One, a title for the widely expected leader who was to come for the deliverance of Israel. This revelation forms the basis for Jesus’ triune name—Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter concluded his message with a response from the people (Acts 2:37-40).

*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”*

The message was for “whosoever” (Acts 2:21, 39). The message produced the conviction of sin.

The people were “cut to the heart.” The Holy Spirit worked with the Word to bring conviction of sin (John 16:8-9). This Greek word is used only here and means literally, “to be sore pricked as by a sharp point.” It points to the emotion of pain in their hearts that was caused by Peter’s words.

The message evoked the question, “What shall we do?” Their conviction led to the question, “What shall we do?” True conviction will always lead to this question. Note the Philippian jailor later on in Paul’s ministry (Acts 16:30). And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

The message concluded with specific instructions. These devout people were instructed by Peter to...

- Repent (Acts 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20)
- Be baptized (Acts 8:16; 19:4-5)
- Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 5:32)
- Be saved from this perverse generation (literally, “separate yourselves from”).

*And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” Acts 2:40*

Peter had much to say about this subject. It had to do with the ongoing nature of their response. The word perverse means “crooked, bent, curved, winding, twisted, or warped.” It is used to apply to anything that will not go toward, that is, straight onward, but will go now on this side and then on that side, making a crooked path.

It is used of a horse that will not follow the leading of the driver, but rebels by pushing in this

direction and that, instead of the way it is supposed to go. It is used to describe the movement of a serpent who crawls along the ground, never in a straight line, but always from this side to that side. It is used of someone who does not know the correct path but goes to the left hand and to the right hand, never arriving to his proper destination. It is used of a drunkard who reels and staggers from one side to another instead of going forward.

This is the kind of generation in which we are living today (Pro. 30:11-14).

Peter witnessed the miracle conversion of 3000 people (Acts 2:41).

Peter used the keys of the Kingdom to open the door of faith to the Jews (Gal. 2:7-8).

*This is the sheaf of firstfruits that was gathered in and presented to the Lord on this great day of the firstfruits (Lev. 23:10-17).*

## **The First Local Church is Established (Acts 2:42-47)**

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

This very first harvest tells us a great deal about the dynamics of the Early Church. The ingredients of the first church are a model for us today. Notice the twenty ingredients of a successful church right here from the very beginning.

- Repentance and Faith
- Water Baptism
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- Separation or Holiness of Life
- Prayer
- Teaching
- Fellowship
- Breaking of Bread
- Fear of God
- Signs and Wonders
- Practical Love
- Generosity
- Unity
- Corporate Gatherings

- House to House Gatherings
- Joy
- Simplicity of Heart
- Praise toward God
- Favor of the People
- Evangelism

This is what an “Acts 2 Church” looks like. Could this be how the New Testament Church “delivered itself” from their perverted generation?

The steadfastness and commitment of the first church is evident. They continued steadfastly (Acts 2:4; see Acts 1:14). The verbs in this passage indicate continuous, ongoing, dedicated activity in these areas. They continued daily (Acts 2:46),

The verb used in both passages (proskartereo) means “to be earnest toward, to persevere, to be constantly diligent and to adhere closely to.” It ties into the verbs that are used in most of the examples given. The verbs are used in the imperfect tense which indicates “ongoing, continuous action.”

The real force of these verbs is preserved by reading “kept” with each of the verbs:

- The disciples kept being filled with awe.
- They kept sharing everything in common.
- They kept selling their goods when individual needs arose.
- And the Lord kept on adding to them.

This was not “on again, off again” Christianity. This was the persistent lifestyle of the Early Church.

The lifestyle of the early believers is challenging. They maintained a love for teaching and preaching—the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42; I Tim. 1:10, 4:1, 6, 13, 16; Heb. 13:9).

They maintained fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42). This involves focusing on relationships and sharing our lives regularly with one another (I Cor. 1:9; Eph. 3:9, 5:11; Phil. 3:10; I John 1:3, 6-7).

They maintained the breaking of bread together (Acts 2:42). This may refer to the celebration of the Table of the Lord (I Cor. 10:16; Luke 24:35; Acts 10:7, 11) or eating bread from house to house in hospitality (Acts 2:46).

They maintained a corporate expression of prayer together (Acts 2:42).

They maintained a healthy fear of the Lord and His God ordained leaders (Acts 2:43; 5:5, 11; 19:17).

They maintained a lifestyle of generosity and practical expressions of love (not commanded, but a natural response). They had all things in common. They sold possessions and goods to be able to help

others in need.

They maintained a spirit of rejoicing and worship (Acts 2:46-47). The Lord worked with them to add people to the church (Acts 2:47).

## **Question for Discussion**

When it says that they had all things in common, was this a Christian form of Communism?

### **The usual interpretation**

The usual interpretation is to regard these words and the whole description, in 2:44-46 and again in 4:32-37, as of that of a communistic society in which all the members sold their possessions, pooled the proceeds, and received their sustenance out of this common store. The enthusiasm for this communism was engendered by the vivid expectation of the immediate return of Jesus, it is said, when property would have no significance.

### **Other facts to consider**

There are some facts that seem to go against this interpretation.

- The case of Barnabas seems to be singled out as unusual, going beyond what was commonly done when he sold all.
- Ananias and Sapphira were told by Peter that they had the right to retain their property or any part of the proceeds derived from the sale of the same (Acts 5:4). It was their lying and deception, not the owning of things that was condemned.
- Mark's mother (Acts 12:12) and Mnason (Acts 21:16) seem to have retained their dwellings.
- Outside Jerusalem, the early Christians seem to have retained possessions from which they made voluntary gifts, as in the case of Dorcas at Joppa (Acts 9:36, 39), of the Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:39), and of those at Corinth (II Cor. 8:12, 9:7).
- Paul and James speak of both the rich and the poor in other assemblies (I Tim 6:17; Gal. 2:10; I Cor 16:2; II Cor 7:13, 15, 9:6-7; James 2:1-5, 4:13).
- Many of the first churches were started in the dwellings of people in the church (Col. 4:15; Phm. 2).

### **A unique challenge**

In this day when 3,000 were saved, perhaps something very unique was taking place. The 3,000

were very likely mostly out-of-towners. They decided to stay in Jerusalem where they had no jobs, no houses, etc.

The local believers gladly accepted the challenge of care for these converts and the obvious sacrifices that went with it. This most likely continued until these people were absorbed into the community, were established on their own or went back to their land of origin. This was not a pattern found in other churches later. It seems to have been part of the uniqueness of this “birthday” experience.

Some have even suggested this act by the church was not a positive thing and actually contributed later on to the poverty of the church at Jerusalem that is emphasized later on in the Book of Acts (Rom. 15:26).