

LESSON THREE

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

TEXT: Acts, Chapter Two.

A. JESUS PROMISED TO ESTABLISH THE CHURCH:

Scriptural References:

"... Upon this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18).

"... It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (John 16:7).

Jesus said, "I will build my church." This shows that when Jesus spoke these words the church was still future. Jesus had disciples and followers but He still had no church. The rock that the church was to be built upon was the truth of the DEITY of Jesus as confessed by Peter. We must remember this as we study the second chapter of Acts.

The church was to be the mystical body of Christ upon earth, a spiritual body indwelt by Christ's own Spirit, the Comforter. This could not be until Jesus ascended and the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost.

B. PENTECOST:

The events as recorded in the second chapter of Acts took place on the Day of Pentecost.

Pentecost was an event planned by God and prophesied in Leviticus chapter 23. The annual feasts of Israel were the Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits and then fifty days after the Firstfruits, the feast of Pentecost. The Firstfruits was a type of the resurrection of Christ (I Corinthians 15:23) and Pentecost took place fifty days after the resurrection which of course, means that the 120 disciples were in the Upper Room for a period of ten days.

B. THE UPPER ROOM:

In Acts 1:13 it states that when they returned from the Mount of Olives, the disciples went up into an Upper Room. When our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper it was in an Upper Room. Whether or not it was the same Upper Room we cannot be certain.

The "Upper Room" has a special meaning in a Christian's experience. To have communion with God we must be "up" and "above" the world, and be "inside" a room with the world on the outside.

In Acts 1:15 it states that the number of disciples in the upper room were about one hundred and twenty. There had been five hundred who were witnesses of the resurrection. Where were the three hundred and eighty? Isn't this a true picture of those who attend prayer meetings today?

The one hundred and twenty who obeyed the Lord by tarrying were rewarded by becoming the CHARTER MEMBERS of the New Testament Church.

The Upper Room speaks of UNITY. The one hundred and twenty were in one place with one accord. Five times we have this expression:

Acts 1:14 - "with one accord"
Acts 2:1 - "with one accord in one place"
Acts 2:46 - "with one accord in the temple"
Acts 4:32 - "of one heart and of one soul"
Acts 5:12 - "with one accord"

What would happen today if God's people would get together to pray with one accord for ten days?

D. THE PHENOMENA OF PENTECOST:

When the Holy Spirit came, He did three things:

1. He filled the house (verse 2);
2. He came upon each believer (verse 3);
3. He came into each of them to abide (verse 4).

He filled all the house because the Church is the "temple of the living God" (I Corinthians 3:16); He came upon each believer to endue with power (Luke 24:49); He filled each believer with Himself.

When the Holy Spirit came there were three phenomena:

1. A rushing mighty wind - felt;
2. Tongues of fire - seen;
3. Tongues - heard.

In John chapter three the wind is used as a type of the Spirit in the work of new birth. The Greek word of spirit is the same as that for wind. Fire is used in the Bible in connection with sanctification and purification. With tongues the gospel is preached to the multitudes. At the tower of Babel God used tongues to confound the languages and bring about disunity and division. At Pentecost God used tongues to proclaim the gospel message and bring about unity and harmony.

E. PETER'S SERMON:

Jesus had given Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16:19). Therefore it was Peter who was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom first and unlock the door of the Kingdom to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

The mighty phenomena of Pentecost attracted a tremendous crowd. The people were amazed and perplexed not understanding what was going on. Some began to ask, "What meaneth this?" Others began to mock and accuse the disciples of being drunk. The disciples were drunk but not as the crowd supposed. They were drunk, not on spirits, but on the "SPIRIT."

Peter began his sermon with the words, "Be this known unto you." We might divide his sermon into three parts:

1. An explanation concerning "this" - verse 12.
2. A proclamation concerning HIM - verses 22-36.
3. An application concerning "them" - verses 37-40.

Peter told the crowd that this phenomenon of Pentecost which they were witnessing had been foretold by the prophet Joel. The Spirit was to be poured forth upon all flesh. Both men and women of all ages, cultures, races, nationalities, and classes might now receive the Holy Spirit.

Peter stresses the sin of Israel in rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. He places great emphasis upon the resurrection of our Lord. Why? The answer is quite evident. Many thousands had witnessed the death of Jesus; everyone knew about His death but few knew about the resurrection. Also, his death was not unusual for all men die, but only He who is divine, could arise from the grave. To believe in His Deity is to accept the atoning value of His death. Therefore, Peter placed great emphasis upon the resurrection.

F. **ACTS 2:38**

Actually, what Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost was the DEATH, BURIAL & RESURRECTION of Jesus Christ. This is the GOOD NEWS of what GOD DID for man in providing Salvation. This is the message that brought conviction upon the crowd assembled.

They were "pricked in their heart" (verse 37). This speaks of Holy Ghost conviction which is absolutely essential to salvation. A man must be brought under conviction; he must see his need and a desire aroused. Then he will cry out, "What shall we do."

As far as providing salvation there is nothing that man can do, but there is much that he must do if he is to receive salvation. Here is where we are brought to the importance of Acts 2:38. Here are the keys that Peter used to unlock the door to the Kingdom: REPENTANCE, WATER BAPTISM IN JESUS NAME and THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST. Actually this is DEATH, BURIAL and RESURRECTION. It took these three to provide salvation; it takes these three to become a recipient of salvation. A man must be identified with Christ in DEATH, BURIAL and RESURRECTION.

G. **THE RESULTS OF PENTECOST:**

Peter reminded them that the promise was for them and he exhorted them to save themselves from the "untoward generation" (crooked, perverse generation). This shows again that there is something that a man must do if he is to be saved.

There were many marvelous results:

1. Three thousand souls were born again that very same day.
2. Every day after that souls were being saved (verse 47).
3. The church continued steadfastly in,
 - (a) Apostles' doctrine (teaching);
 - (b) Fellowship;
 - (c) Breaking of bread;
 - (d) Prayers.
4. Many signs and wonders followed the ministry of the apostles.
5. Everyone feared God.
6. They sold their possessions and had all things common.

This matter of communal living will be studied when we come to the fifth chapter of Acts.

LESSON THREE

SELF HELP TEST

- A. When was the church born?
- B. Write out the Scripture with reference where Jesus promised to build His church.
- C. How many CHARTER MEMBERS were there in the church?
- D. State the three phenomena of Pentecost:
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- E. How many days did the believers pray in the Upper Room? What is the proof of this?
- F. State the THREE divisions of Peter's sermon.
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- G. State FIVE results of Pentecost as recorded in Acts:
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____