

A SURVEY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

3. THE CHURCH IS BORN Acts 2

Adult Sunday School
Gethsemane Baptist Church
H. David Nichols

THE CHURCH IS BORN

The Book of Acts tells us the story of the beginnings of the Christian church. In chapter one we read about how Jesus gave His disciples instructions as to the mission of the church. (1:8) The disciples added an apostle so the leadership of the church would be complete and in place. He instructed the disciples “that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father.” (1:4) He promised that soon they would be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

“As the Holy Spirit was given to men, the disciples were baptized (1:5) and at the same time filled with the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit is described in I Cor. 12:13. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to join people of diverse racial and social backgrounds into one body – the body of Jesus Christ, which is His church. In the strictest sense of the word, Pentecost was the birthday of the church.” (Wycliffe. P. 1126) That baptism of the Holy Ghost was the birth of the New Testament church. Believers all over the world fellowship as one body. They are united by the Holy Spirit of God that comes into them at their salvation. He is that unifying spirit that makes one of many. Because of our geographic locations we meet together in local assemblies yet, the one thing common to all is the presence of God’s Holy Spirit.

The church was born. Jesus told His disciples that they would spread His message to all the people of the world. He promised them power and ability to do this. As a demonstration of the fulfillment of that promise the Holy Spirit allowed the disciples to begin to speak the truth of the Gospel “with other tongues, [languages] as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (1:4) There were people in Jerusalem at that time from many places around the world. They all heard the message in their own languages. Verses 8 – 10 give a list of all the places from which the people in the crowd had come. “These countries formed a circuit around the entire Mediterranean Sea. Most of these peoples could speak the popular Greek of the Hellenistic world, but they also spoke their native tongues.” (IBID. P. 1127)

The crowd did not understand at first what was happening. Some of the people mocked, saying that the disciples were drunk. To give explanation to what they had witnessed, Peter stood up and began to preach. In this message Peter explained to these Jews that what was happening had been promised in Old Testament prophecy. He quoted a passage from the Book of Joel with which his listeners would be familiar. “Peter offered an explanation of what had occurred before their eyes and then moved on to a proclamation of the Gospel, which was embodied essentially in the announcement of the Messiahship of Jesus.” (IBID.) Peter, in a powerful paragraph

preaches that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. The people had crucified Him but He rose again from the dead as evidence of His divinity. Peter then begins an explanation of how one enters the New Testament church by salvation. *“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (vs. 37) He tells them first of all to “repent”. He meant that they were to turn from their old ways of living and worshipping God. They were to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. This means that they were to immerse themselves in Jesus and fellowship with Him only. That is where they would find “the remission of sins.” Verse 38 requires careful Bible study. Salvation does not come by water baptism as some try to make this verse teach. When they believed on the Lord Jesus, as the proof of their salvation, they “receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”. (Eph. 1:13-14) *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”* (vs. 41-42)

The last five verses of Acts chapter 2 are interesting when they are viewed in light of I Cor. 5:17. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* When a person is born again,

they are changed. The Holy Spirit makes them new people. Notice how those first Christians changed. They continued every day studying and believing the teachings of the Apostles. They were given to prayer. They had all things in common. They voluntarily sold their possessions and goods and shared them among the poorer members of the church. Generosity and compassion are signs of the new birth. The believers fellowshiped in the church every day in “one accord.” That is, in one mind and spirit. They were contented (“gladness and singleness of heart”). They praised God. These are all signs of a changed heart where spiritual priorities have taken over. They had become “new creatures in Christ.”

God “added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Those who “should be saved” were those who had received Christ as their Savior. Notice the word “saved”. They have been rescued, saved, from the penalty of the law, which was separation from God because of their sin. God saved them by His grace because of His love. Are you sure you are saved?

Ideas to consider:

1) Do you think that the church was born at the baptism of the Holy Ghost as described in Acts 1:5 and I Corinthians 12:13?

2) Why do you think God allowed the disciples to preach in other tongues at Pentecost?

3) Why does Acts 2:38 require careful Bible study?

4) Are generosity and compassion really signs of the new birth?

5) In what sense does a person get “saved”?

Notes:
