



Focus Points...*For Acts 2*

Stop And Consider...

- * How the disciples-turned-apostles really needed a “jump start” if the Kingdom was going to go into all the world; and
- * How the apostles in waiting never gave up. Instead, they trusted in Jesus’ promise to send His Spirit.

Look...

- * At the apostles and other followers praying and meeting in houses;
- * At the Holy Spirit’s gift of tongues, and how it was used to bring about faith in the hearts of those in whose language was spoken; and
- * At the early converts extreme, complete devotion to Jesus and His Kingdom.

Listen...

- * To Peter’s Holy Spirit-given eloquent call to faith, complete with detailed Old Testament references;
- * To the believers, ever gathered in prayer; and
- * To the hearts of the penitent who, being forgiven, respond with inestimable joy.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, Your presence at Pentecost demonstrated Your most important work: to bring and sustain faith in Jesus Christ. Enable me, by my reading, to respond to Your working in my life with joy and heightened witness to Jesus Christ. I pray in the name of Jesus whom You proclaim. Amen.

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Commentary:

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Acts 1:4-5 (NIV)



With the addition of Matthias, the now-back-to-twelve apostles waited in Jerusalem as Jesus had instructed them. During this time of waiting, they were not sitting on their hands and staring at the walls. Their selection of Matthias (to replace Judas) demonstrated that they recognized their appointed time of “waiting” was not a time for passivity. Instead, it was a time of anticipation of God’s greater work.



This anticipation fueled in them an even greater passion for prayer. In Acts 1, Luke noted that the apostles (along with other women including Jesus' mother, Mary) met each other in the "upstairs" room in Jerusalem. There they prayed "constantly" (1:12ff.). This small gathering of apostles and followers had reached a considerable size, about 120 (1:15), much less, however, than the five hundred who had seen the risen Lord (I Corinthians 15:6).

The Lord had promised to send His Holy Spirit at least three times in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday (John 14:16-17; 15:26; and 16:13). He repeated that promise at His ascension. Can we doubt that He would have also repeated it several times during His forty days on earth after His resurrection?

Jesus' parting words were "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:26 [NIV]). But did the apostles *really* understand Jesus' purpose, even at this late date? The apostles *were* eagerly waiting in Jerusalem as Jesus instructed. But were they still waiting for the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel?

Still "foolish...and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," (Luke 24:25), the apostles' mindset may have been one which longed for the Holy Spirit to powerfully bring about a political messianic Kingdom. After all, Jesus' response to their question about the restoration of Israel (1:6) was probably as clear as mud...at least in their minds.

We must also note the apostles were also waiting for the Feast of Pentecost ("*Shavuot*"), the second most important feast of Judaism. It had been forty days since the Passover and preparations were already beginning for Pentecost. Since the apostles were already there, it was reasonable for the apostles and believers to stay around a few more days for this Feast instead of going back to their family and homes.

Pentecost was a festival of thanksgiving. But instead of occurring after *all* the harvests have been gathered (as in the United States and elsewhere), Pentecost was a thanksgiving for the harvest of first-fruits. It was also a time of asking God for His blessing on the remainder of the harvest to be completed.

Perhaps that is why Jesus chose Pentecost as the birthday of His Church. The initial three thousand people who converted to Christianity on Pentecost was a rich first-fruit harvest. With this powerful beginning, the apostles—and the



Church—could anticipate greater daily additions to their “harvests” of “those being saved” (1:41).

Note several things about the Pentecost event.

- * *First*, everyone was in one place, “a house,” not at the Temple (cf.2:2).
- * *Second*, the Holy Spirit’s manifestation came suddenly and with great surprise.
- * *Third*, it was *unmistakable*. No one could miss the noise or the flames. It even attracted the attention of those in the surrounding area near the house.
- * *Fourth*, the Spirit didn’t just fall on anyone—or no one in particular. His gift was specific. It fell on “*each one* of them” (1:3) so that everyone could hear the message of salvation.
- * *Fifth*, everyone gathered there received the gift, *not* just the Twelve.
- * *Sixth*, the gift of tongues was not some sort of unintelligible, indistinct babbling. Tongues were clear, intelligible languages currently in use. Given by the Holy Spirit, those who spoke in tongues did so even with correct dialects and inflections. Foreigners who heard would have been amazed. They would have considered those who spoke in Spirit-given tongues to have been “natives.”
- * *Seventh*, the purpose for the gift of tongues was for *unbelievers*. Many had come to Jerusalem for the Pentecost feast from distant regions: Parthia, Mede, Egypt and Crete. These unbelieving pilgrims heard the clear simple message of Jesus and believed (cf. 1:7ff). Paul likely used Pentecost as the basis for his instruction regarding “tongues” in I Corinthians 14:22-25.

Of course, Pentecost would not have been complete without the ever-present antagonistic detractors. Luke notes these detractors claimed the apostles and those blessed by the Spirit were merely early-morning drunks. Not that it was the accusation of drunkenness which apparently prompted Peter to raise his voice for the most remarkable sermon he ever preached.

Peter’s sermon contains a surprising eloquence. Some may even find it hard to believe that Peter could make such an articulate delivery. The disciple with the unbridled mouth, the Gospels never depicted Peter having with such remarkable richness of insight and understanding. Of course, it was not Peter’s working, but



the Holy Spirit's power working in Peter. As Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit would provide the words they needed (cf. Mark 13:11).

As Peter began to preach, he provided the blueprint for all who would proclaim Jesus. This blueprint is called the "*kerygma*," a Greek word meaning "Gospel proclamation."

The *Kerygma* is a recognized pattern of proclamation first used at Pentecost. The *kerygma* will be seen elsewhere in Acts and was the pattern of the early Church's evangelistic preaching. The *kerygma*, in Acts 2 and elsewhere in Acts, contains the following elements:

- * A record of prophecies fulfilled pointing to Jesus as Messiah (Often there is also mention of John the Baptist, but not here);
- * A recounting of Jesus' miraculous workings, demonstrating He was the Messiah;
- * An account of how "wicked men"—including sinners in the audience—who unjustly crucified the Messiah;
- * An affirmation that God raised Jesus from the dead;
- * An invitation that all sinners repent, believe and become baptized.

Reduced to its most basic level, the *kerygma* fulfilled exactly what Jesus told the apostles to proclaim. "Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in...to all nations" (Luke 24:26 [NIV]).

Acts 2:42ff. describes what is perhaps the *greatest* miracle of Pentecost: the believers "devoted themselves." Upon conversion, all believers sold their possessions, clearly following the pattern for discipleship set by Jesus for His disciples who left all to follow Him. Truly Peter's preaching was not intended to get people to give their "assent" to Jesus. He wanted them to be disciples—just like he and the other 120 were.

The believers' boldness of sacrifice also translated into a boldness of witness. "Every day they continued to meet together in the Temple Courts," Luke noted in 2:46 (NIV).

The most hostile place they could possibly be, the Temple also offered the greatest opportunity for spreading the *kerygma*, i.e. the Gospel. Note also that they were imitating what Jesus did each day during Holy Week—teaching in the Temple.



What was the result of the Holy Spirit's working? Unbelievers became believers. Sinners repented. Believers became devoted. And the Lord added daily to the number of those saved.

Prayer:

Lord, I know that Your promises are not only true, but that their fulfillment is better than anything I can imagine. Lord, as You promised the Holy Spirit to Your apostles, also give me Your Holy Spirit that I, with boldness, might daily proclaim You as my Lord and Savior. In Your powerful and amazing name I pray. Amen.

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