

THE CHURCH IS BORN

Acts 2:1-47

Key Verse: 2:36

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

In this chapter, God pours out the Holy Spirit on Jesus' praying disciples. The church is born. We can find here God's purpose for his church, the core gospel message which is the foundation of the church, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, Lord of the church, the holy nation which is the church.

First, the coming of the Holy Spirit (1-21)

The Risen Jesus had told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the gift the Father promised. They would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them, and that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. So after his ascension, they returned to Jerusalem, gathered together in one place and prayed. The true oneness for which Jesus had prayed was there. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the praying disciples. At that time, Jews from all over the world had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost (Lev 23.15,16) This feast was one of the three times each year when the Jews should go to Jerusalem to worship. It was called Pentecost because it was 50 days after the celebration of the Passover. This feast was also called the Feast of Weeks, and it commemorated the giving of the law at Mt Sinai. Thus, it was a time of the renewal of the covenant of Israel with God.

The Holy Spirit's coming sounded like a violent wind. They saw what looked like tongues of fire coming to rest on each head. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. The Jews from every nation heard them praising God the languages of many nations. The wind represented the mighty life changing power of God; the fire represented purification and the other languages indicated that they were being equipped for Christ's mission to the world.

Those who heard them did not understand what was happening. Peter stood up with the eleven and addressed the crowd that gathered. Shortly before, he had been hiding behind locked doors in Jerusalem. Now he stands boldly before the gathered pilgrims and the very people who had crucified Jesus. First, based on the Bible, he explained what was happening. He quoted the prophesy of Joel. God promised in Joel that in the

last days he would pour out his Spirit and enable his people to prophesy, to see visions and dream dreams. This prophecy was being fulfilled. God's people would be equipped to be kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They would be a nation of Bible teachers; they would have God's vision for the world. The last days began when Jesus ascended into heaven. They will be completed when he comes again in glory. Until that time, the Holy Spirit would be at work in the world and the gospel must be preached to extend the kingdom of God to the hearts of all people. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The way of salvation, the way back to God was open.

Second, Peter told the gospel story clearly and simply and invited them all to repent and be saved (22-36). He spoke about Jesus' beautiful life. As he went about serving the people, God worked through him to do miracles and wonders and signs. In spite of this, the jealous Jews had handed him over to be crucified. This was God's purpose and plan, for it became the way of forgiveness. But it did not excuse the evilness of the men who perpetrated this crime. The religious leaders had borrowed the hands of the Romans to have a good and innocent man crucified. God raised him from the dead. King David, who had a deep personal relationship with God, had spoken about resurrection and his own longing for eternal life. He had looked forward to the Messiah who would be seated at the right hand of the throne of heaven. Jesus, through his resurrection and ascension had exactly fulfilled David's prophecy.

Then Peter made his announcement and gave an invitation: "Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." He continued, "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." He promised that those who repented would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And this promise is for us today as well. He challenges them and us to separate ourselves from the corrupt and godless world and be the people of God.

Third, the Church. (42-47) And so the church was born. What is the church? It was a community of people who repented and accepted the gospel. They were born again by the Holy Spirit and could love God and love each other. They became a holy nation. They shared everything. No one was too poor and no one was too rich. No one was drawn away by selfishness or by worldly desires. They met together, ate together and praised and thanked God together. And God himself added to their number every day. They became a loving holy nation and a joyful kingdom of priests who would go into the world with the gospel.