

The Acts of the Apostles

“A study of the application of theology to the work of the church as a group”

Chapter Two

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Now we begin to try to understand this wonderful day of Pentecost, which is the day when the church era began in earnest and Children of God were permanently given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. This chapter is full of wondrous material and we must not try to rush through a study of what Luke reported to us in this chapter.

Acts 2:1 “And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”

The disciples had done just as directed by their Lord (except perhaps by prematurely appointing a third apostle) and were waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The first events that we see about the arrival are two manifestations of normal nature but in an abnormal fashion. We see that first there was a violent rushing wind that filled the entire house and then something like tongues of fire moved around and ended up resting on each of them. At this point they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and we see that the Holy Spirit directed them to speak in other tongues.

What are the significance of the roaring wind and the tongues of fire? The Hebrew word for spirit can also be interpreted as “wind”. The Bible tells us of three applications of the Spirit as breathe or wind that all have to do with bringing forth life and order out of death and chaos. The first occurrence is in Genesis chapter one:

Gen 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Gen 1:2 And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”

As the story unfolds we are told how God then brought life and order into the formless and void earth. Here the word “Spirit” can be interpreted wind or breathe.

For the second case of the application of wind, we go to the second chapter of Genesis:

Gen 2:7 “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

God breathed life into man so that he became a living being for the second application of the Spirit, wind, or breathe bringing forth life.

The third application of the Spirit in bringing forth life is what we are studying now:

Acts 2:2 "And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting"

Here the Holy Spirit is bringing forth spiritual life from spiritual death. These people are now a trinity (body, soul, and spirit) in the same essence as God. This is the first example of God bringing spiritual life from spiritual death so it was done in a very spectacular fashion as a sign of the work of God.

What about the tongues of fire? A truly born-again person must talk about what God has done to them and so God gives the person the ability to talk about this miraculous sign done by God. The symbol of the tongue then represents to everyone that this gift has been given. And why did God manifest this gift as a tongue of fire? What does fire bring? Fire brings light and warmth. Fire can also be a symbol of judgment. Perhaps God is using the fire as a symbol of judgment of the sin nature of all of these people since the work of Jesus has just been finished to pay the price of this judgment. Then we know that fire brings light into the world and we know many instances where Jesus told of being the light of the world and that the world would reject this light and prefer darkness. Here are some examples.

John 1:4 "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

John 1:9 "There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man."

John 3:19 "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.

John 3:20 For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

John 3:21 But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

John 8:12 "Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.""

The warmth of fire is to represent our warm fellowship with God and with fellow believers. Remember that the world will know that we do love God because of the love we have for each other.

John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 17:23 "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me."

So I think that we understand why God uses the symbols of tongues of fire and of a roaring wind. Praise the Lord! But do remember that God uses miracles to either show forth His glory or to signify and put His stamp of approval on some work of His. So I do not expect that their ever has been or ever will be a repeat of this Pentecostal event. From now on, people are given the same gifts and blessings but there is no need for a miraculous sign to appear for everyone to see as was needed at this time. Now God's children go forth as commanded by Jesus and with the gifts and powers needed for the task:

Matt 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Matt 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The Third Person of the Trinity

Now we need to look in some detail at the Holy Spirit, His tasks, and the particular gift of speaking in tongues. I recommend a very readable book by Billy Graham⁸ as an excellent book for the believer to gain important insight into the Third Person of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is almost totally neglected in the modern church, yet He is the Third Person of The Trinity and is God. If we say that God can be represented by infinity, then we are neglecting infinity/3, which is also infinity! Also note that the very kingdom of God depends upon the Holy Spirit:

Rom 14:17 "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit".

The giving of the Holy Spirit to individual believers is the pinnacle of God's individual work through Jesus Christ:

1. Jesus came physically to earth and lived the perfectly holy life so His holy work could be imputed to the believers so that they could be righteous before Holy God.
2. Jesus died physically on the cross accepting the full penalty from God for our sins so that we could be sinless before Holy God.
3. Jesus was physically resurrected from the dead so that the world could see that God had accepted the works of Jesus to fulfill His dual purpose through Jesus.
4. Jesus ascended into Heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father.
5. The Holy Spirit was sent to each believer to effect the sanctification of the individual believer and the communities of believers.

The fifth step in this process is crucial to the life of the believer and yet it is hardly ever mentioned in the church today, or it is horribly misrepresented. Jesus Himself said that this last step was critical:

John 16:7 “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”

Perhaps the reason for the neglect of the Holy Spirit is fear on the part of church leaders that there will be misuse in the congregation as there was in the early church and as we see in some churches today. However such fear is demonstrating a distrust of God, and God makes it very clear in the Scripture that the Holy Spirit has a very important mission in God’s purpose for the individual believer and the congregations of believers. The Holy Spirit even has to pray for us (Rom 8:26, 27)! We must then approach the topic of the Holy Spirit with awe, respect, and diligence. Without the Holy Spirit’s guidance and counsel we cannot proceed successfully toward sanctification, which is an integral part of God’s purpose for us here. It is impossible to truly worship God without including the Holy Spirit. Thus I am afraid that I must conclude that most churches in America today are severely crippled.

Spiritual Gifts

It is not possible to be exhaustive in listing the gifts because some other words in Scripture could also be interpreted as gifts in addition to those listed below. However these are the main spiritual gifts as understood by most theologians.

<u>Romans 12:3-8</u>	<u>1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30</u>	<u>Ephesians 4:11</u>
Prophecy	Word of Wisdom	*Apostleship
Ministering (helps)	Word of Knowledge	Prophecy
Teaching	Faith	Evangelism
Exhorting	Healing	Pastoring
Giving	Miracles	Teaching
Government (ruling)	Prophecy	
Showing mercy	Discernment	
Service	Tongues	<u>1 Peter 4:9-11</u>
	Interpretation	Hospitality
	*Apostleship	Speaking
	Teaching	
	Ministration (helps), Government (ruling)	

From what we have seen above, it is imperative for each child of God to know his/her gift so that he/she may obey the command to employ the gift(s). You can go to my web site (<http://LivingTheology.com>) that will refer you to this web site where one may go and determine his/her spiritual gifts: <http://www.churchgrowth.org/cgi-cg/gifts.cgi>. There are also many books that contain methods of determining spiritual gifts (“Jesus on Leadership” by C. Gene Wilkes, Life Way Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 1996 is strongly recommended).

Tongues

The Holy Spirit also gives the gift of interpretation so these must be discussed together:

1Cor 12:10 “and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another {various} kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.”

First we have to decide what the gift of tongues is. In Acts 2:1-11 it is certainly the speaking in languages that are real and known by people listening:

Acts 2:6 “And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language.”

Some people claim that the gift of tongues includes speaking in an angelic language unknown by men as indicated by Paul in the following scripture:

1Cor 13:1 “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

However the language does not have to mean that two different kinds of tongues are involved: one of men and another of angels. The meaning can be that Paul is talking about a common type of language that is used by both men and angels. So this verse is not a proof positive that tongues can be some esoteric angelic language.

All of 1 Cor 14 talks of the use of tongues and other gifts. It is obvious from these discussions that Paul considers speaking in tongues among the lowest order of the gifts.

Some say that since in the following verses about the use of tongues Paul says that they are not to be used unless an interpreter is present then the implied language is not some known tongue for the people present would not understand without an interpreter. However, I cannot consider that interpretation to be final. Paul could have had in mind the speaking of someone in a “real” language, but just not one known by everyone present.

1Cor 14:26-29: “What is {the outcome} then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, {it should be} by two or at the most three, and {each} in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.”

Certainly in the following sequence of verses in the same chapter Paul is talking about “real” languages.

1Cor 14:10-13: “There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no {kind} is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.

So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual {gifts,} seek to abound for the edification of the church. Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.”

From my reading of the occurrences of tongues as a gift, I do conclude that the gift of tongues is the use of a “real” language and certainly one much needed by missionaries going into countries where their native language is not spoken. Anyone who has studied foreign languages can also understand the need for a gift of interpretation for translating the true meaning of words in one language into the same meaning in another language can be very difficult.

Certainly the use of “tongues” has been a source of confusion and disruption in modern churches and we know that such a result is not God’s purpose. Some churches allow everyone to be “speaking in an unknown tongue” at once and certainly that is in violation of 1 Cor 14:26-29. Paul wrote of problems caused by the misuse of the gift and his warning is certainly valid today. There is also one other thing that we can know for sure: we should never discourage the use of the gift of tongues as seen below.

1 Cor 14:39: “Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.”

We must always remember:

1 Cor 14:40: “But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.”

In my opinion Paul states the order of worship in the church at his time very well in 1 Cor 14:26-29. It also seems perfectly applicable for a church today if the congregation is composed of people who speak in various languages. Paul said:

1 Cor 14:9: “So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.”

So if we have people in our congregation who do not understand English, how will they be edified by a great sermon in English? Sign language is used in many churches today as a person signs while the preacher preaches so that those who are deaf may also be edified. Sign language is recognized as a valid language so many churches are using the gift of tongues in a worship service. From the perspective of the deaf, the preacher is preaching in tongues and the person signing is the interpreter.

Thus my understanding of the gift of tongues is that it is the ability to speak in a known language and therefore very much needed in the modern church. I have used verses of Scripture out of order but in my opinion, not out of context. You certainly should carefully study chapters 12 -14 of 1 Cor 12-14.

1. Gift: Tongues and interpretation
2. Ministry: Missionary work, evangelism in areas not speaking your native tongue, translating Christian material into other languages,

translating sermons and teachings into another language for an audience, etc.

3. Empowerment: Contact organizations that need Christian interpreters go on short missionary trips to countries whose people speak a language God has gifted you with the ability to fluently use it, help writers translate Christian material into other languages, and always let your church administration know of your gift.

Now we are ready to continue our study of Acts 2. The next few verses we have already discussed in our interpretation of the meaning of speaking in tongues.

Acts 2:5 “Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

Acts 2:6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language.

Acts 2:7 And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

Acts 2:8 "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?"

Acts 2:9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

Acts 2:10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

Acts 2:11 Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God. "

Acts 2:12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

Acts 2:13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine.""

We see that these people from many different regions of the world were all hearing the Gospel message in their own tongues. Although many people would know some Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew, it is very unusual that these people would be able to speak in all of these languages that were not common to the region. The people gathered hearing the Gospel were from **every nation under heaven**, meaning that all known languages were being spoken so that all of these people could hear the message of God in their native language. The people doing the speaking were only from Galilee and would not be expected to know all of these languages. Some of the people did not want to believe that this was a miracle of God and wanted to blame the situation on all 125 of the people being drunk.

But Peter came to the rescue to clarify the situation. Peter was now filled with the Holy Spirit and able to understand and to explain what was really happening.

The early church always emphasized the preaching of the Word of God for the Word is used by God in the development of the church. Preaching must always include proclaiming the Gospel message and it must include teaching of doctrinal content to the

people of God. We see in the book of Acts that people were persuaded to believe and to be redeemed by the apostolic preaching. Before getting into the meat of his sermon, Peter first addressed what was on the peoples' minds concerning what had just happened at Pentecost and then we have the first Christian sermon that is a model for all sermons.

Acts 2:14 “But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: 'Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words.

Acts 2:15 For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day;

Acts 2:16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

Acts 2:17 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says,' That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams;

Acts 2:18 Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy.

Acts 2:19 'And I will grant wonders in the sky above, And signs on the earth beneath, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.

Acts 2:20 'The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.

Acts 2:21 'And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' “

Now Peter could understand that God was continuing His work that He began so very long ago by speaking through His prophets. Peter recognized that he was in the last days and we can know that we are still in the last days. The last days means the last of the times of revelation that God has been giving of Himself throughout all the ages. For over two thousand years we have been in this last dispensation and now, just as when Peter spoke, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Of course this does not mean that everyone will be saved, but only those who know to call upon the name of the Lord in the sense that Jesus is recognized as their Lord. Jesus clearly stated such a requirement:

John 6:65 “And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father."”

We have seen that often Peter is the leader of the group and now he takes his stand along with the other apostles to explain to the people that what they had seen happen at Pentecost had been proclaimed long ago. He spoke to the residents of Jerusalem (men of Judea) and to all the people who had come to celebrate Pentecost. Peter spoke in boldness and confidence, which portrayed a very different person than he was before the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. First he told them that the people were not drunk for it was only 9:00 am and even drunkards were not usually drunk so early in the day. Most drunkards would still be recovering from the night before at this time of the morning.

He then goes on to explain to them by quoting from the prophet Joel concerning what was prophesied to occur in the last days. The “last days” was a common expression in Old Testament times referring to the era when the Messiah would return to set up His kingdom. There were two teachings about the coming of the Messiah. He would first come as the suffering servant (I only list the first five verses but all of this chapter should be read:

Isa 53:1 “Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

Isa 53:2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

Isa 53:3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Isa 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Isa 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.”

The second coming of the Messiah would be when he came in glory to set up His kingdom:

Isa 9:6 “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Isa 9:7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”

The concept of these two actions was not clearly understood (obviously by the actions of the Pharisees toward Jesus). These last days have now lasted for over two thousand years as God has graciously called into His family people from all over the world. The complete fulfillment of Joel’s prophesy obviously has not yet come and we await this time trusting in the perfect timetable of the Lord. We now have been receiving a foretaste of the full kingdom by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Peter said that “God would pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind” and we are still seeing that happen today.

Titus 3:5 “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

Titus 3:6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,”

The spiritual kingdom was established at Pentecost and Christ rules through His called-out people, but one day we will see the establishment of the total kingdom upon all the universe. All that Peter quotes from Joel did not happen at Pentecost and will not occur until the totally fulfillment of the last days (Acts 2:17-21). We are also told of some of these events in the book of Revelation. Jesus also described some of these events in His words as recorded in the following:

Matt 24:29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken,

Matt 24:30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

Matt 24:31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."

Peter ends his quote from Joel by telling them that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved from the wrath of God and the terrible consequences that will come upon the earth. Next we are presented with the great sermon by the transformed Peter.

The First Christian Sermon

Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--

Acts 2:23 this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

Acts 2:24 "And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Acts 2:25 "For David says of Him, 'I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

Acts 2:26 'Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; Moreover my flesh also will abide in hope;

Acts 2:27 Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, Nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.

Acts 2:28 'Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou wilt make me full of gladness with Thy presence.'

Acts 2:29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Acts 2:30 "And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne,

Acts 2:31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.

Acts 2:32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

Acts 2:33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

Acts 2:34 "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord,' Sit at My right hand,

Acts 2:35 Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet. '"

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified.'"

Note that this sermon has two main focus points.

1. The Bible is at the center of the sermon.

Many times today we hear as a sermon a preacher read a few Bible verses and then talk about pop psychology or sociology or some memorable events in his life. The children of God are supposed to be going into corporate worship to praise and glorify God, our Father. We need to grow spiritually so that we can be better ambassadors for the rest of the week. We should prepare the night before the worship service for the worship and then we should take pen and paper to the corporate worship as we listen from the Word of God and take notes about the portion of the Bible being lifted up by the preacher.

Peter had three texts upon which he expounded. The first was as we discussed above.

Joel 2:28 "And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.

Joel 2:29 "And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Joel 2:30 "And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke.

Joel 2:31 "The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

Joel 2:32 "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the Lord has said, Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls."

Surely this Old Testament Scripture was brought to his mind by the Holy Spirit because it is a clear prophesy of what was beginning to happen to the church.

His next text was

Psalm 16:8 "I have set the Lord continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Psalm 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely.

Psalm 16:10 For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.

Psalm 16:11 Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is fulness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.”

Peter reminded the crowd of what had happened to Jesus and that this Scripture was also fulfilled in the death of Jesus. His body did not decay and He was taken up to be at the right hand of God, the Father. His next text was also a popular text and the most quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament.

Psalm 110:1 (A Psalm of David.) “The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.””

The first major word for “Lord” is “Jehovah” and refers to the one great God of Israel. The second “Lord” is “Adonai” and refers to an individual greater than the speaker. This then is David citing a word of God in which God tells another person, who is greater than David, being David’s Lord to sit at His right hand until He makes Adonai’s enemies a footstool for Adonai’s feet. This other person can be no one other than Jesus Christ and we see why it was quoted so often in the New Testament.

Certainly Peter is saying that there is nothing more important to tell people than what God says because that is what the people need to hear, not what a preacher has to say.

2. The Sermon was Christ-Centered

This focus is very important because the Holy Spirit had just descended upon all of them and the crowd was aghast and ready to hear about some mysterious “force”. However Peter first spoke about what the Bible had to say about Jesus and then he talked about what he had to say about Jesus. The Holy Spirit does not lift up Himself but He puts the focus on Jesus Christ:

John 15:26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,

John 15:27 and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

A clear indication that something is wrong with what is supposed to be a Holy Spirit inspired message is when the speaker lifts up the Holy Spirit and the “works” being done through the speaker by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus. Peter told about the ministry of Jesus, the crucifixion of Jesus, the burial of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus, and the present ministry of Jesus. This proclamation technique is called “kerygma” using the Greek word for “proclamation”. Another example of the use of this kerygma was given us by Paul:

1Cor 15:3 “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

1Cor 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

1Cor 15:5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

1Cor 15:6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;"

Many years after Peter's sermon Paul gave the same basic gospel facts as given by Peter and such a proclamation should be followed by any sermon. Today it seems that preachers try to say what the people want to hear rather than what they need to hear and the purpose is to build a huge congregation, or should I say audience?

Luke now reveals to us the result of Peter's sermon and the result would make a modern "church builder" salivate to have the same results. But it is God that brings in His children, not the preacher. Sermons should follow the basic proclamation of Peter and Paul and leave the results to God.

Acts 2:37 "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:39 "For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."

Acts 2:40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

Acts 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

God opened these peoples' hearts so that they could spiritually hear the truth and they then responded as only they could after receiving this news of the work of Jesus. That one day about 3,000 people were added to the Kingdom of God! Notice that verse 39 says that only the people whom God had called to Himself came and they **all** came. The call to come to God is irresistible. God purifies us from our sin, gives the righteousness of Jesus to our account, and then adopts us as His children. Note the following:

1John 3:1 "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."

The Greek word translated "bestowed" or "given" in some translations can also be translated "smote" or "strike". God drags us to Him and slams us in the face with His wonderful love so that we can neither resist His call or His love. Now we see the result of this wonderful work of God in the daily lives of His new children.

Acts 2:42 "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Acts 2:44 And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common;

Acts 2:45 and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

Acts 2:46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

Acts 2:47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

The result of a transformed, born-again experience was the same then as it is today. These people could not get enough of learning about God through the teaching of the Apostles. After I was born again I also could not get enough of learning about my God and my Lord and the indwelling Holy Spirit. I was also given the gift of discernment and I was saddened to learn of the many false teachings that exist as I poured over documents and information about the work of God in the world and of the misuse of the office of Pastor in so many places. It is so easy for people to get carried away as James noted:

James 1:14 “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.”

The lust of power is so easily a tool that people can give into and then they can begin lifting up themselves rather than Jesus Christ. It is easy also for the ones listening to a false teacher to become carried away and to depart from the narrow way:

Gal 2:13 “And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.”

Heb 13:9 “Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited.”

2Peter 3:17 “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness,”

As true children of God we must always be on the alert that we might be carried away by our lusts and/or the teachings of false teachers that promise what is clearly not taught by the Scripture such as worldly prosperity, success in all that we do, physical health, etc.

Just as these new converts in the first church, I also was filled with a sense of awe at the awesome God that had saved me from myself and from Satan. He is still working in my life to save me from myself and I praise Him for His continuing work in the lives of His people.

The love that these people had for the other new converts was also awesome as they were taking care of each other by pooling their resources and helping those in need. There also were signs and wonders given through the work of the Apostles to verify their work as authentic work of God. God kept adding to this congregation every day and only God knows for sure how many people were saved in this short time period. It has been estimated that maybe 25,000 people were saved in just a couple of weeks in this area! The church grew from 125 to tens of thousands in a very short period of time. Surely God did turn the world upside down by the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these first Apostles and disciples. In only 300 years the Roman Empire would declare Christianity to be the main religion of Rome. And as awesome as that result is, it may be that the popularity of the “religion” 300 years later was also the beginning of the degradation of Christianity.

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