



BIBLE STORIES EVERYONE OUGHT TO KNOW

Main and Oklahoma Church of Christ ^ Adult Bible Studies ^ Winter-Spring 2010

April 18, 2010

Pentecost, Acts 2

Getting Started

The story of Pentecost is the story of God establishing a new relationship with His creation through Jesus Christ. Because of Christ and His sacrifice on the cross, humanity can now be fully reconciled with God. Immediately after the cross no one understood it, but people started down the path of being reconciled with God at Pentecost, and afterward believers continued to spread the good news everywhere they went.

What's the story?

In Acts 1-2, Jesus commands the apostles to stay in Jerusalem. About 10 days after Jesus ascended, the Spirit arrives, flooding the room with the sound of a mighty wind. Above each person's head hovers a flame, perhaps symbolizing the presence of God. The Holy Spirit enables the apostles to speak in different languages. This is a timely miracle, since foreign-speaking Jews from all over the world are in town to celebrate the harvest festival of Pentecost.

At 9 A.M. Peter addresses the crowd which includes Jewish leaders who had executed Jesus. Peter preaches that Jesus is Messiah and Lord, and that "God has raised him from the dead" (Acts 2:24). Peter also describes how people should respond to the news that Jesus is the Lord, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Some 3000 believe what they hear. The converts repent of their sin, are baptized, and spend time with the apostles learning more about Jesus. The church is born.

Later, in Acts 10, Peter goes up to the rooftop at noon to pray. There he sees a vision of animals which had been prohibited in the Jewish diet since the days of Moses. In his vision, these animals appear in a sheet being lowered from heaven. "Peter, get up!" says a voice. "Kill these and eat them" (Acts 10:13). The apostle refuses to break the Law of Moses. The voice continues, "When God says that something can be used for food, don't say it is not fit to eat" (Acts 10:15). The vision puzzles Peter. While he is still thinking about it, messengers from Cornelius, a Gentile Roman soldier, arrive and ask him to come with them. Peter goes from Joppa to Caesarea, and Cornelius' entire household is converted. When these Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit and praise God in other languages, Peter realizes what the vision means: God wants His church to share the new covenant with all the races and cultures in the world.

So, what does this story say about God?

The Spirit's arrival at Pentecost marks a turning point in the way God communicates with human beings. Until now, God has sent the Holy Spirit only to chosen individuals, such as prophets who conveyed God's instructions to the people.

However, at Pentecost and in the home of Cornelius, the promise God made to Joel comes true, "I will give my Spirit to everyone" (Joel 2:28). All who call on the Lord personally receive the presence of God. God wants intimacy with all His children, the type of relationship He had with Adam and Eve before sin came into the world. After Pentecost, with His Spirit now freely given to all believers, the intimacy God desires is possible.

Now, what about our faith?

All believers today should still respond to Peter's words to repent, be baptized, and receive forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. In the daily grind of life, believers often overlook the priceless gifts of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. Remember, these gifts are as much a miracle (supernatural) today as they were at Pentecost.

Pentecost and the story of Cornelius remind us of our mission. At Pentecost, Jesus gave the mission of spreading the good news to the Apostles, and subsequently to the newly converted Christians. The mission to spread the good news is now ours. The model and example of the early church is before us and should be our guide, "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" Acts 2:46-47).

Monday: Read "Getting Started"

1. Pretend you are a Jew living during the ministry of Jesus. If you knew the Law, the writings of the Prophets, and the sermons of Jesus, would you understand that a new relationship between God and man had arrived after Jesus' death and resurrection?
2. What would a Gentile who did not know Jewish teachings think of Jesus' resurrection?

Tuesday: Read "What's the story" and Acts 2

1. What is the central message of Peter's sermon?
2. Why was there such a response to Peter's sermon?
3. When Peter asked the crowd to 'repent', what was he asking them to repent from?

Wednesday: Read "What's the story?" and Acts 10

1. Why did Peter refuse the voice in the vision telling him to eat the animals? Why was it an important issue to Peter?
2. Peter told the crowd in Cornelius' house that it was against the Law to visit the home of a Gentile. Was that true? (Hint: it was actually Jewish custom, not a Law of Moses.)
3. When Cornelius' household receives the Spirit it is the first example of a Gentile receiving the Spirit in the Bible. Is this important?

Thursday: Read "So, what does this story say about God"?

1. What does it say about God that He would give His spirit to all believers?
2. Probably no one understands what it means to have "the Spirit of God inside you". How can you deal with so much uncertainty about something so important?

Friday: Read "Now, what about our faith?"

1. Seeing the presence of God's Spirit and the miracles of Acts 2 and 10 convince the crowd and Cornelius' household to convert. Does the Spirit perform the same roll today?
2. How does the presence of God's Spirit affect your life in Christ?
3. In what way do you live like the early church is described in Acts 2:46-47? In what ways do you not live like in Acts 2:46-47?