

Acts 2 • Ecclesiology

Introduction

The epistles can be thought of as inspired commentary. It's what the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to write to interpret the rest of the Bible. If you want to understand the Gospels, read the Gospels through the prism of the epistles, through the prism of the apostles' teachings. If you want to understand the Old Testament – the purpose of the Law – read Romans and Galatians. If you want to understand the sacrificial system in the book of Leviticus, read Hebrews. We always interpret the rest of Scripture, both the Old Testament and the Gospels, through the prism of the apostles' teaching. The book of Acts, however, gives us something more; it gives us the apostles' examples. Not just the teaching itself, but how they lived it out on a practical level, how they applied it, and thus provided a demonstration for us for all posterity. [NOTE: Have the group read through the entire 2nd chapter once before beginning.]

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

⁵Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." ¹²And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

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

[Read v.1-13]

Q: What exactly is "Pentecost" from a purely Jewish perspective?

A: It's the "Feast of Weeks", one of the three principal pilgrim feasts of the book of Leviticus 23-24, and one of the four pilgrim feasts in the day of Jesus, Hanukkah being the additional one beyond Passover, Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Jews would come to Jerusalem from all over the known world to celebrate these pilgrim feasts.

Q: According to traditional rabbinic teaching, what other famous event in Jewish history occurred on the same day of the calendar as Pentecost?

A: It was the exact same day on which the Law was given on Mt. Sinai.

Point: On the same day the Law was given, the Holy Spirit was given. When the Law was given, 3,000 people fell; when the Holy Spirit was given, 3,000 were saved. This is showing the stark contrast between the covenants: "the letter kills", but "the Spirit gives life". (2 Cor. 3:6)

Q: How might the early church have interpreted the presence of the sign of tongues? What great, OT event is identified with people of many languages?

A: It's a contrast to what happened at the Tower of Babel. Man lost his unity through sin at the Tower of Babel which is now regained through Christ.

Point: Man's identity is no longer based on language, ethnic identity, tribal identity, national identity or anything else attached to physical birth, but is now instead based on **NEW** birth. The early church saw tongues as demonstrating the unity which was originally lost through sin as now restored through Christ, no longer depending on birth, but on **SECOND** birth.

Q: What other event does traditional rabbinic teaching associate with a multitude of languages?

A: According to the Mishnah – Jewish history which is, admittedly, **NOT** a biblical source – the same day the Law was given by Moses at Mt. Sinai, which they hold to be the same day on the calendar as Pentecost, 70 languages were heard being spoken when the Law was given to Moses.

Point: Messianic Jews of this period – those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah – would have seen the events of described at Pentecost in Acts 2 as the Messianic fulfillment of the Feast of Weeks.

[Continued on the next page.]

Q: What was going on in the temple at this very same time?

A: The high priest was giving a wave offering of two loaves of bread. Unlike other wave offerings, **THIS** offering contained leaven. It symbolized an offering for both Jew and Gentile.

Q: What was the traditional Jewish reading on this day?

A: The book of Ruth. It's the teaching of a rich and powerful Jewish man who took a Gentile bride and exalted her, and through them came the lineage of David through whom the Messiah would come.

Point: Jesus would be Savior of **BOTH** Jew and Gentile in the age of the church, therefore He had to come through a union of both Jew and Gentile in the marriage of Ruth and Boaz.

[Read v.37-47]

³⁷Now 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?"

³⁸Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." ⁴⁰And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

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

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶Day 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, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Q: The Hebrew liturgy taking place in the synagogue or temple is called a "siddur", literally meaning "to set in order". The order in which they did things was very important during such feasts. What is the exact order followed in v.42?

1. "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching..."
2. "...and to fellowship..."
3. "...to the breaking of bread..."
4. "...and to prayer."

Point: Before anything else, **doctrine** came first.

Q: Relevant Greek Trivia: What are the 3 basic kinds of preaching in the early church?

1. **"Charigma"**. This is preaching the Gospel to the unsaved as Peter is doing in this chapter. Peter's first sermon might be called "Peter's Charigma". A charigma proclaims the need for repentance and new birth and is most closely associated with evangelism.
2. **"Homilia"**. This is preaching which exhorts people to live the Gospel, to live a life of co-death and co-resurrection in the power of Christ, filled with the Spirit. Charigma proclaims the Gospel to the unsaved, homilia encourages people to live by it.
3. **"Didaskin"**. This means "doctrine". This is the doctrinal teaching of Jesus.

Point: Think of these as equal legs on a tripod, which by definition cannot stand with a defective leg. For a church to stand spiritually, it must have all 3: charigma, homilia, and didaskin. It must be evangelistic, it must exhort the congregation, and it must have doctrinal teaching. If any one of these is missing, it will not stand. All 3 are present in the book of Acts.

Q: How does Peter respond when asked what they're to do with his charigma, his preaching of the Gospel to the unsaved?

A: He first and foremost implores them to "Repent".

Q: What was the Hebrew interpretation of "repent"? What did they understand it's meaning to be? Was it merely being sorry?

A: The Hebrew word has it's root in "to return". The Hebrew idea of repentance is to turn from sin towards God, not simply being apologetic for having done something wrong, but turning from it towards God. In their view, unless there is a "turning", there is no real repentance.

Point: There **MUST** be a conviction of sin, a cleansing of the Holy Spirit, and an understanding that unless God loved you so much that He paid the price, you are judged and doomed to hell. Going forward there must be a turning, a ceasing from living according to the ways which doomed you in the first place.

Q: What comes after repentance?

A: Baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ”. (v.38)

Q: How does baptism represent co-death and co-resurrection with Christ?

A: When you go under the water you co-die with Him; when you come out you’re co-resurrected.

Q: Why would it be significant to Jews of this time that the baptism take place “in the name of Jesus Christ”?

A: They had many kinds of baptism rituals at this time, both Jewish and Pagan. This was to make a distinction between ordinary baptisms in the name of God or Pagans and that of Jesus, being God who became man. It distinguished baptism in the name of Jesus from other forms of existing Jewish and Pagan baptism.

Q: Peter concludes in v.38 that “you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. What are the 3 variations of chronology of how the Holy Spirit is received in the book of Acts?

1. The apostles were born again and **THEN** they were filled (or baptized) with the Holy Spirit and in Acts 8, the Samaritans were born again and **THEN** they were baptized in the Holy Spirit.
2. The first Gentiles saved in Acts 10 were born again, baptized in the Holy Spirit, and **THEN** baptized in water.
3. On the day of Pentecost, the 3,000 were baptized in water and the Holy Spirit at the same time.

Point: The sequence is not important. What is important is the end product. The book of Acts allows for **ALL** of it. However, there is no provision for either infant baptism or baptizing an unregenerate person.

Q: What did the signs of wind and fire at Pentecost represent?

A: They represent the proof of baptism by the Spirit in the presence of holiness and power.

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

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

[Read v.41-42]

Q: What activity did the early church repeatedly engage in?

A: First came continual devotion to the apostles’ “didaskin” – learning doctrine.

Point: Unity of the Holy Spirit depends on common doctrine. One faith, one baptism, and a common body of belief without which there is no real unity.

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

John 17:17

Q: How did Paul teach in Ephesians 6 through the symbolism of the armor of God that doctrine always comes first?

A: Before anything else, even before the breastplate or righteousness, one has to first gird themselves with the truth. (Eph. 6:13-14)

Point: *There is no true salvation without the follow-up of proper discipleship. The “Great Commission” (Mt. 28:19) makes no mention of “converts” but only to make “disciples”. Without “didaskin” – the doctrine of Jesus as taught by the apostles – the tripod falls.*

Q: How can you “continually” devote your self to the apostles’ teaching?

A: Although we do need to study the Word, this is not specifically an example of intense Bible study, but rather putting God’s Word into practice. To be “continually devoted” to doctrine means to live it out.

Q: What else were they “continually devoted” to?

A: “Fellowship” The concept is best understood as “being cemented together”.

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Coming down upon the beard,
Even Aaron’s beard,
Coming down upon the edge of his robes.
Psalm 133:1-2*

Q: How might this Psalm describe biblical fellowship and unity?

A: As explained in Hebrews, Aaron and the high priest are pictures of Christ, shadows of the Messiah. Our anointing depends on being under His head. Notice that the oil never touches the flesh – it goes off the head, off the beard, and over the robe. It never touches the flesh.

Point: *Often times what appears to be real or to have spiritual results is not actually of Christ because it is based in the flesh. Everyone must be properly placed under the head – Christ – so that the anointing is real and not tainted by the flesh.*

*He who separates himself seeks his own desire,
He quarrels against all sound wisdom.
Proverbs 18:1*

Point: *No matter what excuse someone gives for not being in fellowship, what it really comes down to is that they’re seeking their own desire, not what God knows is best for them and best for others. They’re quarreling “against all sound wisdom”.*

Application: *Koinonia fellowship is community life. It’s not attending meetings, but being part of the body under the headship of Christ, exercising your gift under the control of the Head in harmony and coordination with others. The “eye” is related to the “foot”, but it’s coordinated by the “brain”, the head. That’s fellowship.*

Q: After fellowship came “the breaking of bread”. How did the early Christian celebrate the Lord’s Supper?

A: They had “agapes” or “love feasts”.

Q: What was the overall message of Passover to Hebrews in the way that they celebrated it? How might it compare with the Lord’s Supper which occurred on the same day of the calendar?

A: For the Jews it was a look back at their redemption out of Egypt, but a looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. For Christians we look back to Calvary, but forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

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Q: We know that Scripture commands that we do not partake in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. (1 Co. 11:27) How might the order here be just as important as the "siddur" or order of Passover?

A: Before anything else, get the doctrine right. (It comes from the Passover itself.) Then get the fellowship right, becoming one body that we might never forget Him.

Point: By proclaiming His death until He returns, it's a way to keep us repenting and in right relationships with each other, eating and drinking judgment to ourselves.

Q: What did the Jews have to do before they could eat Passover?

A: They had to purge the leaven, a symbol of sin. Before we come to the Lord's table we need to repent of our sins.

Q: Additionally, what did the Jews do just prior to purging the leaven?

A: There was a washing ritual, which parallels Christ's washing of the apostles' feet.

Q: Why do only the feet need to be washed?

A: Our feet are what come into contact with the fallen world.

Point: In washing each other's feet, we're restoring one another from our contact with the world. It's a very expressive explanation of the true biblical meaning of "fellowship".

Application: The **DOCTRINE** of the Lord's Supper must be right, the **FELLOWSHIP** must be right, and **THEN** we have the Lord's Supper.

Q: Why do you suppose the very last activity to which they continually devoted themselves was prayer?

A: The only reason we **CAN** pray, the only reason we have access to the Father in the first place, is because of the blood of the Lamb, because of what Jesus did. That's why the Lord's Supper precedes prayer.

Q: Keeping with the concept that the order is important, why else would prayer be last?

A: Effective, proper prayer can't be achieved either individually or corporately as a church if it's not first rightly based on doctrine, relationships are in their right and proper order ("...*first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.*" – Mt. 5:24), and so you're in the right spiritual condition to properly take the Lord's Supper. It's about the spiritual quality of one's heart.

Q: Why doesn't it say that they were devoted to PETER'S teaching?

A: It's an important distinction that their devotion was to the **APOSTLES'** teaching in order to biblically establish the future false teachings of things like the Pope or devotion to a single apostle.

Point: Biblical leadership is always a plurality. The apostles were sent out in pairs, it was Barnabas and Saul together set apart by the Holy Spirit, it's found in the example of Moses training Caleb and Joshua or Paul's training of Timothy and Titus.

Second, biblical leadership is always functional and relational, **NOT** clerical and hierarchical. Every Christian is a minister, every Christian is a priest. Only God can ordain a minister.

Third, biblical leadership is “apostolic”, coming from the apostles. Hebrews 3:1 makes it clear that Jesus is **THE** apostle by calling Him “ho apostolos” in the Greek. He is unique and all other apostolic authority is derived from **HIM**. Apostolic authority still exists today in the **BIBLE**, the complete and written Word of God.

⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶Day 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, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

[Read v.43-47]

Q: So when exactly did the signs following to confirm the apostles' authority take place?

A: **AFTER** the establishment of and immersion in right doctrine, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer.

Q: How did all these things combine to change the early church's lifestyle?

A: As Jesus said in Mt. 6:21, “*For where your heart is, there your treasure will be also.*” Their attitude towards personal wealth completely changed. (v.44-45)

Q: What is important about WHERE they met, both “in the temple” and “house to house”?

A: It speaks of having an individual, “vertical” relationship with Christ when worshipping “in the temple”, and a “horizontal” relationship with Him through the other members of the body when worshipping “house to house”. It also speaks of reaching out and achieving things both in large venues where some things are not possible in small groups, and vice versa where intimacy is needed to effect some things not achievable in larger venues. **BOTH** are required.

Point: *There are things that can only be done in small groups. REAL fellowship can never take place in the “temple”, a really big group. Likewise, gifts are nearly impossible to develop in the “temple”, but need to be incubated in small group settings. Likewise there are things which can only be accomplished in a large group setting.*

Overall Application

- *Share what the Holy Spirit is saying to you personally through this lesson as to what **YOU** need to do establish yourself firmly in doctrine, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer. Which do you feel strongest in and which need work? Why do you suppose you have “lapses” concerning any one of these?*
- *Share what the Holy Spirit is saying to you about the conduct of church in your local church. How does it relate to meeting “in the temple” versus “house to house”? How does the quality of each individual's walk contribute to the overall success or failure of the church?*
- *To what degree are all 3 types of biblical teaching present in your life and church? To what does this speak?*

[NOTE: This study is drawn from Jacob Prasch's 2-part sermon, “The Fundamentals of Ecclesiology”. Everyone is highly encouraged to acquire it [here](#) and listen to it in its entirety.]