

## Book of Acts Study

### **Men of Grace**

January 26, 2010

Acts 1:12 – 2:41

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### Outline of Acts

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- H. Community life: The appointment of the Seven to help Hellenist widows (6:1-6)**
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**Acts 1**

12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile.

13 When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying.

Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the Zealot), and Judas (son of James).

14 They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

15 During this time, when about 120 believers were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them. 16 "Brothers," he said, "the Scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David. 17 Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us."

18 (Judas had bought a field with the money he received for his treachery. Falling headfirst there, his body split open, spilling out all his intestines. 19 The news of his death spread to all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood.")

20 Peter continued, "This was written in the book of Psalms, where it says, 'Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it.' It also says, 'Let someone else take his position.'

21 "So now we must choose a replacement for Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus—22 from the time he was baptized by John until the day he was taken from us. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus' resurrection."

23 So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.

24 Then they all prayed, "O Lord, you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen 25 as an apostle to replace

Judas in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs." 26 Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven.

**Acts 2**

1 On the day of Pentecost [all the believers were meeting together in one place. 2 Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. 3 Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. 4 And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

5 At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. 6 When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

7 They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, 8 and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! 9 Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, 10 Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!" 12 They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other. 13 But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!"

14 Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. 15 These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. 16 No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

17 'In the last days,' God says,

'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions,  
and your old men will dream dreams.

18 In those days I will pour out my Spirit  
even on my servants—men and women alike—  
and they will prophesy.

19 And I will cause wonders in the heavens above  
and signs on the earth below—  
blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

20 The sun will become dark,  
and the moon will turn blood red  
before that great and glorious day of the Lord arrives.

21 But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord  
will be saved.

22 "People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the  
Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through  
him, as you well know. 23 But God knew what would happen, and  
his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed.  
With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and  
killed him. 24 But God released him from the horrors of death  
and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its  
grip.

25 King David said this about him:

'I see that the Lord is always with me.

I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

26 No wonder my heart is glad,

and my tongue shouts his praises!

My body rests in hope.

27 For you will not leave my soul among the dead  
or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.

28 You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with  
the joy of your presence.'

29 "Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the  
patriarch David wasn't referring to himself, for he died and was  
buried, and his tomb is still here among us. 30 But he was a  
prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of  
David's own descendants would sit on his throne. 31 David was  
looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah's

resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among  
the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

32 "God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of  
this. 33 Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in  
heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised,  
gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and  
hear today. 34 For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet  
he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit in the place of honor at  
my right hand 35 until I humble your enemies, making them a  
footstool under your feet."' 36 "So let everyone in Israel know  
for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to  
be both Lord and Messiah!" 37 Peter's words pierced their  
hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers,  
what should we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Each of you must repent  
of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of  
Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive  
the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 This promise is to you, and to your  
children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by  
the Lord our God." 40 Then Peter continued preaching for a long  
time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this  
crooked generation!"

41 Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added  
to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

**Subject:** Re: Brians' Brief - Act 2:36-38

Brothers:

Arguably the theme of Romans is **"the gospel"**, that is, the **"good news"** of Christianity. But before starting the Romans study that I promised, I thought it may be helpful to go back and look at the first time the "gospel" was preached – by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost.

### **A LITTLE BACKGROUND - THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

It was an extraordinary day! It was only 50 days since the resurrection of Jesus and only 10 days since His ascension into heaven. It was a special Jewish festival day, called the Day of Pentecost. The Jewish pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem from all over the ancient world to celebrate Passover and Pentecost were still crowded in the city. The 120 faithful followers of Jesus were gathered in an upper room in the city.

***And, then it happened! Accompanied by a violent wind and tongues of fire from heaven, the Holy Spirit was "poured out" on the 120 disciples waiting in that upper room, and they were all "filled with the Holy Spirit". This event -- the coming of the Holy Spirit -- was prophesied in the OT (Joel 2:28-30; Ezekiel 36:24-27), it was predicted by Jesus during His earthly ministry (John 14-16), and promised by Jesus 10 days earlier just before His ascension (Acts 1:5,8).***

There was pandemonium in the city. These emboldened Spirit-filled disciples were supernaturally empowered to speak to the pilgrims in the own native languages about "the great deeds God had done", no doubt focusing on the death and resurrection of the Messiah Jesus. While they did not appreciate the full significance of that day, they knew that God was doing something huge and significant right before their eyes.

This was it! The day the OT prophets had longed for. This was the inauguration of the "New Covenant" prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and promised by Jesus at the last supper. The new covenant "in His blood", the new covenant of the Spirit, which would supercede and do away with the Old Covenant given on Mt. Sinai about 1400 years earlier. The new age of the Spirit, and new age of grace was beginning. This day is also the birthday of the church, The church (to be made up of both Jews and Gentiles), promised by Jesus in Matthew 16:18, was "born" by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. What a remarkable day!

### **PETER'S SERMON – THE GOOD NEWS**

In response to the crowd's inquiries and questions, the apostle Peter, the spokesman for the disciples, preaches that great sermon – the first message of the newly inaugurated church age. After explaining the prophetic significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, he brings his sermon to a climax with these words:

***"Therefore, let all the house of Israel know beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36)***

He was fearless, clear and direct. Jesus is Lord – He is God in the flesh. Jesus is the Messiah promised in the OT. And, you crucified Him! The majority of the crowd listening to Peter had witnessed the events of the previous 8 weeks and many, believing that He was a blasphemer and imposter, had called for His crucifixion.

But, in hearing Peter's words, **"they were acutely distressed"** (vs.37a). The Greek literally reads "their hearts were pierced". This is clearly the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (prophesied by Jesus in John 14-16), which always precedes genuine conversion. Their next words show the depth of their conviction: **"What should we do?"**, they cried out to Peter and the disciples (vs.37b).

Peter's answer declares clearly and unambiguously the good news (the gospel) of the age of the Spirit, the age of the New Covenant, the church age. Here it is, brothers the gospel in one sentence:

***"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 Spirit" (Acts 2:38)***

Here are the two principal blessings of the gospel -- 1) forgiveness of sins and 2) the gift of the Holy Spirit.

### **FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

Forgiveness has to do with our **legal standing** before God. God the holy, but gracious, Judge forgives our sins and declares us to be "not guilty" of all the sins we really have committed. As forgiven people we have the legal standing to enter God's holy heaven when we die. No fear of death and the certainty of resurrection bodies and eternal life. Pretty awesome! God is able to forgive our sins because of what Christ did for us on the cross

In Isaiah 1:18 the Lord says, "**Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow**". As many of you know, I was born and raised in sub-tropical Durban, South Africa where we don't even have frost in the winter, let alone snow! At age 20 I came to North America to Prairie Bible Institute in Alberta, Canada -- where they have snow for about 6 months of the year! I still remember that first snow. It was in the early fall, probably October. I was on my way to the first class of the morning when the snow started to fall. I spent the whole class looking out the back window at the incredible scene outside. Within an hour everything was covered with this pure white layer of snow. I had never seen anything like it. So white. So clean. So pure. The campus looked so different. The dust, dirt and grime, and the customary wear and tear of the campus were blotted out and covered by this clean white snow. The same campus, but now so different. I immediately thought of Isaiah 1:18. My sins are forever blotted out and covered by the pure righteousness of Christ. When God looks down on me from heaven, He does not see my scarlet sins, which are many and ongoing, but He sees instead the pure white snow of Christ's righteousness, and therefore forgives and accepts me. That's the gospel. It was indeed good news to Peter's audience who had to deal with their sin in crucifying the Messiah. And its good news to us who have plenty of sins of our own.

### **THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT**

The gift of the Holy Spirit has to do with **relationship and life**. Simultaneously with God's forgiveness of our sins, God the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. The Bible refers to this supernatural phenomenon as being "born again", or receiving "new life", or becoming "new people" with "new natures". The Holy Spirit is our Encourager and Friend -- He is to us what Jesus was to the disciples when He was down here on earth. He is permanently with us -- in the good times and in the bad! He also provides the power and strength to live the kind of life that God wants us to live. And His supernatural presence and blessing is like a "down payment" guaranteeing our future resurrection and eternal life with God.

### **REPENTANCE**

The condition for the enjoyment of these blessing is "**repent and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**". "Repent" means to change your mind -- here the call was for the hearers (Jews in Jerusalem) to change their mind about who Jesus was. They had believed that he was a blasphemer and imposter. Peter had just explained that the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit were proof that Jesus, whom they had just crucified, was really the Messiah, the God-Man who had died on the cross for their sins. Repent is the flip-side to "faith", and is often used

interchangeably with faith. Repent seems to have been used more with Jewish audiences, who needed to change their minds about what they had formerly been taught and believed about the Messiah. Faith was used more often with Gentile audiences, who are urged to trust, depend and rely on Jesus, the God-Man, who died for our sins and rose again from the dead.

### **BAPTISM**

Baptism in this context is not an additional act or ritual necessary for forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit. To this first century Jewish audience (as well as to Peter) the idea of baptism incorporated both the spiritual reality and the physical symbol. In the same vein Billy Graham often says, "trust Christ and come forward ". We know that "coming forward" (or walking the aisle) does not impart salvation. The rest of the book of Acts (e.g. Acts 3: 19-20) and the rest of the New Testament (e.g. Eph. 2:8-9) make it clear that God's salvation is a free gift that we receive by faith. Rather, the physical act of coming forward is the way (or one way) of outwardly expressing or evidencing one's inward faith. In the New Testament baptism was the outward expression of an inward faith. But, it was faith that counted not the outward act. Then, as now, it was possible to be a believer without being baptized (or coming forward); and it was, and is, possible to be baptized (or come forward) without being a believer! Forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit cannot be earned by good works or any kind of ritual; these blessings come through the heart attitude of faith in Christ, and Christ alone.

### **FORGIVENESS – THE HEART OF THE GOOD NEWS**

Forgiveness, freedom from judgment, freedom from the treadmill of legalism, and the certainty of eternal life with God in the final resurrection was certainly "good news" back then, and it is "good news" today! **Through faith in Jesus Christ, you, my brother, are totally forgiven of all your sins -- past, present and future!** Every sin you have committed in the past (and some of us have some biggies), and every sin you will commit in the future (I'm afraid that some of us still have some biggies ahead of us), is included. God the Father accepted Christ's death on the cross as payment in full for all of your sins -- and mine. We are, as the Message translation of Romans 3: 23 puts it, "in the clear with God"! And that is "good news". **Believe it, appropriate it, and enjoy the freedom and joy of God's forgiveness.**

### **MORE GOOD NEWS**

And that is only half the story! We also receive the gift of the Spirit who gives us new life, and begins the life long process of slowly transforming us to be more like Jesus. But, my time (and probably your attention span) has expired. So, more of the "good news" of God's grace will have to wait for the next brief.

Grace and peace,  
Brian