

THE BEGINNING

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Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi when he announced to his disciples that he would build his church (Matt. 16:13, 18). The coming of the kingdom, or the building of the Lord's house, had long before been a subject about which the prophets had spoken (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:3-4). The time for the coming of the kingdom, however, was drawing near in Jesus' time. Both John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, and Jesus spoke of it as being "at hand" (Matt. 3:2 and 4:17). Jesus told his disciples that some of them would not experience death until they had seen the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1).

This means that the kingdom promised by the prophets, John the Baptist, and Jesus himself would come within the lifetime of some of Jesus' disciples. The kingdom that was drawing near was just another way of describing the church. Jesus had used the terms interchangeably in Matthew 16:18-19. After saying he would build his "church" in v. 18 he went on in the next verse to tell Peter he would give him the keys of the "kingdom."

The Promise Of The Father

Just prior to Jesus' ascension back into heaven he gave instructions to his disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait for "the promise of the Father" (Luke 24:46-49). This "promise of the Father" was the promise Jesus had made to his disciples that he would send the Spirit to them as a "Comforter" (Helper). A careful look at this promise in connection with Jesus' statement that they were to "tarry . . . in the city of Jerusalem . . . until ye be endued with power from on high" will prove quite rewarding in helping us understand "the beginning" which we are looking at in this study. Note the following things about this promise to be endued with power:

Endued With Power — When? Two statements made by Jesus just before he returned to heaven point specifically to the time when these disciples were to be endued with power from on high. In Acts 1:5 Jesus shows it would not be long until they would be endued with this power, for he says, "not many days hence." In v. 8 of this same chapter of Acts they would receive this power "after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." If we can discover *exactly when the Holy Spirit came upon them*, and we can demonstrate that *it was not "many days hence,"* or many days from the time Jesus made this statement to them, we can know for sure WHEN they were "endued with" the "power" Jesus promised them.

Endued With Power — Where? Jesus is also very specific about where these disciples would be when they were “endued with power from on high.” In Luke 24:49 he gave specific instruction that they were to “tarry . . . in the city of Jerusalem.” Not just *a* city, but *the* city — the city of *Jerusalem*. The place is stated again by Luke’s account in Acts 1:4 where he reports that Jesus “commanded them that they should not depart *from Jerusalem*, but wait for the promise of the Father . . . which . . . ye have heard of me.” Jerusalem was the place where they were to be endued with power from on high. This is where they were to receive the promise of the Father.

Endued With Power — Why? Why did they need to receive this power from the Holy Spirit, as they had been promised? The power would be given to them when the Spirit came, but why did they need to be endued with this power? Jesus says that the Spirit would be sent to them to “guide you into all truth” and “to shew you things to come” (John 16:13). He would teach them “all things” and enable them to “remember” the things he had said to them (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit, whom Jesus would send to them, would “testify of me,” Jesus said, and they themselves would also “bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27).

Endued With Power — How? Acts 1:5 specifically states that this promise of the Father would be fulfilled, and these men would be endued with power from on high, by being “baptized with the Holy Ghost.” Acts 1:8 shows that this baptism with the Holy Spirit would take place when the Spirit had “come upon” them. When did the Spirit come upon them? To get the answer to this question we must now go to Acts 2:1-4. Please read these verses at this time.

Acts 2, A Fulfillment

Acts 2:1-4. A reading of the first four verses of Acts 2 should convince any honest reader that the kind of things we have been reading in the closing verses of Luke 24 and the first few verses of Acts 1 are finding their fulfillment here. The events recorded in this chapter are taking place “not many days hence.” Jesus had ascended into heaven only ten days before this day of Pentecost which is introduced to us in Acts 2:1. Pentecost means “fiftieth,” and the feast of Pentecost came on the fiftieth day after the Sabbath of the Passover week (Lev. 16:15-16). After Jesus was raised from the dead he made appearances to his disciples for a period of forty days before he ascended back into heaven (Acts 1:3). This would leave about ten days between his ascension and this day of Pentecost. So, indeed, it was not “many days hence” before the events of this first

Pentecost after Christ's resurrection transpired. This puts these events within the "time frame" stated by Jesus for his disciples to be "endued with power from on high."

Acts 2:1 says that "they were all with one accord in one place." "They" who? The antecedent for this plural pronoun is the word "apostles" in the last verse of chapter one. We conclude therefore that it is the apostles who are being described here, and it was the apostles who were "filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (v. 4). Remember that "the promise of the Father" was the promise that the Spirit would be sent as a Helper to lead and guide these apostles into all truth. These men were "filled with the Spirit," language that very much sounds like what was promised when they were told they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The fact that they "spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance" is an indication that the Spirit is now revealing to them the "truth" Jesus had promised he would lead them into when he came to them. They were indeed being "endued with power from on high" as the Spirit had fallen upon them and as a result of having been filled by the Spirit they were speaking as the Spirit gave them utterance. Peter later said in describing the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius that he "fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). He used the same language that Jesus had used when he said, "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11:16 with Acts 1:5).

In other words, when we look at the terms used it becomes obvious that what is happening on Pentecost is a fulfillment of what Jesus had told his disciples. They were at *the right place*, Jerusalem; it was *the right time*, "not many days hence"; the Spirit was doing *the thing promised*, "leading them into all truth"; the Spirit did his work in them in the way they were told it would happen, they were "baptized with the Holy Ghost."

Acts 2:14-36. In v. 16 Peter shows that the work of the Spirit on this occasion is a beginning of the fulfillment of what had been promised by Joel in Joel 2:28f. As he begins to explain what has happened by this outpouring of the Spirit, he says, "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," and then in vv. 17-21 gives us the words of the prophet. He gives a description of Jesus' mighty works, how he was delivered over into their own hands and as wicked men they had crucified and slain him, but God had raised him up from the dead in accordance with words spoken before by David (vv. 22-31). The apostles were all witness of Christ's resurrection from the dead (v. 32). This resurrected Christ had ascended and was now at the right hand of God exalted (v. 33). From God's right hand he is to rule until all his enemies are made his footstool (vv. 34-35). All the house of Israel should be assured of this one fact: "God has made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (v. 36).

Acts 2:37-38. Upon hearing this sermon, many in Peter's audience were convinced. They were "pricked in their heart" and wanted to know what they must do (v. 37). Peter's answer that they must "repent and be baptized, for the remission of sins," takes one back to Jesus' promise that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). This "beginning at Jerusalem" is similar to Peter's reference back to Pentecost as "the beginning," which we saw earlier (Acts 11:15). It was several years after Pentecost before the prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit took place upon the Gentiles; the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy only "began" with the events of Pentecost. The same would be true for this promise concerning repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ. This message was first preached to the Jews on Pentecost ("beginning at Jerusalem"), but it would eventually be made known "for all nations" when Peter preached the gospel for the first time to Gentiles when he preached to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10-11).

Acts 2:41, 47. Some 3,000 of those present were baptized on that day. These were the ones who "gladly received his word" (v. 41). These were added to the number of the saved. The last part of v. 41 says, "and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." After the day of Pentecost the practice was the same. Verse 47 says that as men were being saved "the Lord added [them] to the church." This was done on a daily basis because at that time people were being saved each and every day.

Acts 2:41 and 47 is the first time in our New Testament that the church is spoken of as being here. All references to the church or the kingdom that had been made before, in either the Old Testament or the New Testament, pointed forward, or to the future. This is the reason you may have heard it preached many times that all hands before Pentecost point forward to something yet to come, but after the day of Pentecost all hands point backward toward Pentecost expressing the fact that the church has come. In other words, the church is spoken of as a present reality from Acts 2 forward. It is referred to often throughout the rest of the book of Acts and in Paul's epistles. Christ purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28; Rev. 5:9), he is the Savior of it (Eph. 5:23), and he is the head of it (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; Col. 1:18). The saved have been translated into it (Col. 1:13). Christ now reigns as king in his kingdom (Acts 2:29ff; Rev. 1:5-6). He must reign until the last enemy, death, has been destroyed (1 Cor. 15:24-26). John was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9).

Added To The Church

The expression "added to the church" is significant, especially in view of the many misconceptions people have today regarding church membership. It is true that most modern translations do not include the word "church" in this verse. The American Standard Version has replaced the word "church" with the word "them" ("added to them"), and then it gives as

an alternate rendering the word “together” (“added together”). The New American Standard Bible renders this part of v. 47, “And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” In other words, as people were being saved they were being added to the number of those who were already saved, which of course is the same thing as the church. What is the church? The body of the saved. The church is those who have been purchased by the Lord, because he “purchased the church with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). As one is saved he is added to *the number* of the disciples, or the church of the Lord.

Who Were Added? But if we are asked, exactly who were added to the number of the disciples, or to those who already make up the body of the saved, the answer is not hard to find. Verse 47 says it is “the saved” who are added. Who are the saved? you ask. According to verses 37, 38 and 41 the saved are the penitent, baptized believers. No guesswork is required here.

How Added? How were these people added to the church, or the number of the disciples? Acts 2:47 says, “the Lord added them to the number.” Again, there is no guesswork here. These people did *not* become members of the Lord’s church by “joining” the church. We “join” a local congregation, but to get into the Lord’s church, the body of the saved throughout the world—the church Jesus said he would build (Matt. 16:18), the body, the church, over which he serves as head (Eph. 1:22-23), and the church which he purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28)—he must be added to it by the Lord. Neither did they become members by a “vote” of approval on the part of the members of a local church. The Lord adds one to the church as he is saved.

Which Church? To which church did the Lord add these people as they were being saved? He added them to the only church there was at that time. He added them to *his* church. All others came later, and they are the churches of men. The Lord never added any person to a church founded by man. Such churches are apostate churches. Paul warned about these kinds of departures from the truth some time before they began to develop (Acts 20:29ff.; 1 Tim. 4:1 ff.). The Lord only adds people to the church he promised to build (Matt. 16:18), and the one he purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

What was done to make Christians in Acts 2 can be done today, and with the same results. The simple gospel must be preached (Acts 2:22-36). People must hear the gospel, believe in Jesus Christ, repent of their sins, and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:37-38). As they are saved the Lord will add them to his church (Acts 2:47). He won’t put you in the wrong church. As people are being saved he is adding them to his church. That’s the way it was then, and that’s the way it is now.