

K.E.Y. Bible Study

Description: K.E.Y. Bible Study introduces the essential biblical narratives, concepts, and themes, and teaches the student how to apply the message of the Bible to daily living. Each teaching session is self-contained, which allows participants to join in the study at any time during the five years.

Purpose: To teach the most significant events, passages, and doctrines of the Bible in a manner and using methods which encourages and empowers the student to:

Keep the faith that we have received

Be Equipped to serve the Body of Christ

Become Yoked, or connect, with others for the purpose of ministry

The Coming of the Holy Spirit Into the Lives of Christians

Acts 2:1-41

September 2, 2015

General Background

All forms of religion are either based on legalism or continually face it as a temptation. The Christian faith has a major component built in it that resists legalism. It also provides a means of keeping the faith vibrant without lifeless rules while adhering to moral absolutes. The active and vital work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individual believers and in the church, the body of Christ, is a barrier to legalism and makes a living, dynamic faith possible. The arrival of the Holy Spirit is the third New Testament holy day. Most Christians readily identify the two most important New Testament holy days as Christmas and Easter. Few Christians even know what the Day of Pentecost is or what it means. Without what happened on the Day of Pentecost, the Christian faith would be another legalistic religion.

God chose to reveal Himself through historical events, which means that external, objective evidence can be verified by witnesses. The Christian faith involves a subjective reality, but it is established on an historical reality. Luke gives some details to Theophilus that may be unrelated to the meaning but give historical credibility. Even though some of the details described in Acts 2 are controversial, the purpose and the reality of the Pentecostal event are essential to the Christian faith.

Specific Background

The apostles and followers of Jesus waited in Jerusalem as He had instructed them. The city was filled with many people who had come to participate in the Feast of Weeks, which was observed seven weeks after the Passover. It marked wheat harvest. The Feast had been given the nickname "Pentecost" which literally means "fiftieth." It was observed on the 50th day after Passover. By the time of Jesus, the focus of the festival was not only the wheat harvest but also a celebration of the law given to Moses. For Christians, it becomes symbolic of the law, or the reign, of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

These events occur in a large room, or upper room, in Jerusalem (probably was the room identified in Act 1:13). Early Christian tradition suggested that the Pentecost event occurred in the Temple. However, this is not consisted with either the biblical text or the historical

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circumstances. Any large gathering of Christians in and round the temple this soon after the crucifixion would not have been allowed by Jewish or Roman authorities.

What Happened

While this is a miraculous event, Luke described it in a matter-of-fact literary style and with objective terms. It was not written for the purpose of persuading or impressing but to inform the readers.

Acts 2:1-3: When the day of Pentecost came...

As Jesus instructed them, his followers waited, and they heard what sounded like the blowing of violent wind. They saw what seemed to be flickering flames of fire appearing to land on each person. The Scripture does not say that there were actual flames or a wind, but there were the sights and sounds like a fire and wind. The Spirit of God is often identified with wind and fire in the Old and New Testaments. The word for “spirit” is also the word for “wind” or “breath.” The story of the burning bush and the pillar of fire, both in Exodus, are obviously the work of the Spirit of God.

In giving the Law as described in Exodus 16-19, thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, sound of a trumpet, fire, and earthquake were involved. The audio and visual effects were not the ultimate miracle but were signs pointing to the real miracle, the Holy Spirit coming into the life of every Christian.

Acts 2:4: All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...

The first eight words are the key to understanding the Day of Pentecost, the entire book of Acts, and the rest of the Pauline epistles. Paul teaches in Romans that without the Spirit, we are not of God. The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God.

Acts 2:4: ...and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

This statement has been controversial over the centuries. There are many interpretations of what happened. Five of the more common interpretations are below:

- They spoke in unknown tongues or ecstatic utterances, which are called “glossolalia.” This action is identified with the filling of the Holy Spirit. This position states that speaking in unknown tongues is the primary evidence of the Holy Spirit.
- Speaking in unknown tongues, glossolalia, or speaking ecstatic utterances is a one-time event that only occurred on the Day of Pentecost.
- People spoke in a recognized language that was not their native tongue. As a result, those who were visiting Jerusalem from other countries for the Feast of Weeks could hear the Gospel in their own language. The miracle was that people were able to speak in a language was not native to them. This was symbolic of the fact that Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, would take the Gospel to the people. Over the coming years, because of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the lives of the disciples, they would take the Gospel to all people. The miracle was a sign of what was to come.
- The miracle was not in speaking but in hearing. People heard in their own language. This was also symbolic of Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, taking the Gospel to the

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people. Because of the Holy Spirit, all people would hear the Gospel and understand it through the Spirit's power.

- While Acts 2 describes speaking in other languages or hearing in other languages, I Corinthians describes speaking in ecstatic utterances. Speaking in unknown tongues described I Corinthians is a spiritual gift only for some (and not a major gift), while Acts is a one-time phenomenon. Speaking in unknown tongues is never to be understood as the only or the primary evidence of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:12: “What does this mean?”

Those who heard in their own language wanted to know the significance of the event. Miracles were understood to be signs of a greater reality, and they wondered what the greater meaning was. These were religious Jews, and they recognized that this type of occurrence needed interpretation. The other languages, not the sound of wind or the appearance of fire, were the focus of the questions.

Acts 2:14-40: Peter answers the question, “What does this mean?” Peter’s answer can be divided into four sections.

Acts 2:14-21: The Interpretation of the Event

- **v. 15: “These men are not drunk as you suppose.”**
Some suggested that those who spoke in other tongues were drunk. Peter brought order to the gathering and then explained that no one was drunk. There is some humor to this line as Peter basically said, “We know people do not get drunk until the afternoon.” Jewish custom was that you could not drink wine until after morning prayers which began at 9:00 a.m. Then in a loud voice, Peter explained what had happened and was happening. There is order, reason, and mystery in preaching, and Peter gave a thoughtful explanation.
- **v. 16: “...this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel...”**
Peter paraphrased an Old Testament passage (Joel 2:28-32a) and told the story of Jesus. This sermon was directed to those with a Jewish background.

Acts 2:22-32: Presentation of the Basics Regarding the Person, Message, and Mission of Jesus

- **v. 32: “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”**
Luke began Acts by writing that there were many witnesses to the resurrection, and Peter confirmed it. All 120 who were in the upper room had encountered Jesus at least one time after the resurrection and many of them several times.

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Acts 2:33-37: Connection of the Story of Jesus with the Coming of the Holy Spirit

- **v. 36: “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.”**
The early Jewish Christians proclaimed Jesus as Christ and Lord. The faith declaration “Jesus is Lord” is the central theme of Peter’s sermon. The Gentile Church focused more attention on “Jesus as Lord.” This was not to minimize that He was the Christ, or the Messiah, but to acknowledge that He was authoritative for non-Jews as well as Jews.

Acts 2:38-40: Instructions Regarding How to Respond

- **v. 38: Peter replied, “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.”**
(See the World Wide English New Testament Translation: “Stop your wrong ways and turn back to God,” answered Peter. “And then every one of you can be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Your wrong ways will be forgiven you, and you will receive the Holy Spirit.”)
- **v. 38: “...repent...”**
In the Greek language this verb is an aorist direct imperative, which indicated a strong command to change the heart, mind, and direction.
- **v. 38: “...be baptized...”**
It was a public and symbolic act that Gentiles did in order to convert to Judaism. John the Baptist taught that Jews were to be baptized when they began to follow Jesus.
- **v. 38: “...for...”**
This is a key word that can be translated “for the purpose of” or “because of.” The rest of the teaching of the Bible suggests that we are baptized because we have been forgiven, not in order to be forgiven.
- **v. 38: “...you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...”**
This is a promise: like the people they have seen earlier in the day receive the very presence of God, the Holy Spirit, they would also through repenting.
- **v. 40: With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”**
Peter pleaded with them only after presenting the factual information. Explaining precedes pleading in Gospel presentations.

Acts 2:41: Those who accepted his message were baptized...

This verse is a postscript. Over 3000 people accepted the message about Jesus and were baptized.

What Does It Mean and How Can I Apply It?

By trusting that Jesus, the Son of God, died for my sins and is the Lord of my life, I will experience the presence of God now and forever.