

Acts 2: 37-42  
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Trust and Receive  
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Today's scripture has to do with the immediate aftermath of Peter's first public speech. New believers were moved to ask, "What shall we do?" Peter tells them to take two actions and these actions will produce two results. What resonated with me is that Peter suggests that the results are automatic once the actions are taken. I believe our humanness gets in the way and we try to control the results of our actions rather than allowing the results to unfold, but that's another sermon.

Today I'm going to share what I've learned about the first two chapters of the book of Acts. I thank Dr. Charles Ryrey

who translated a study bible and Dr. Scott Schauf who wrote a commentary that helped organize my thoughts. I have a disclaimer: the names and dates used here may or may not be totally accurate. It seems the "bible debate" is a debate that will never end.

The book of Acts is a record of the spread of Christianity from the coming of the Spirit on Pentacost in 33AD to Paul's arrival in Rome in 61AD. Luke, the author, is said to have written it between 60 - 80AD.

In the first chapter of Acts the crucified and resurrected Jesus came to the apostles at Mt. Olive near Jerusalem and stayed with them for 40 days. It is written that he "went in and out among them" speaking of the Kingdom of

God. Little is said about the 40 days, which is a bit disappointing, but one question is recorded by Luke. The apostles want to know "Are you restoring the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus answered, (paraphrasing) "Never mind the timing, just spread the word that I'm alive." Jesus is then lifted up in a cloud.

The apostles go back to Jerusalem (a days journey away), stayed in an upper room and devoted themselves to prayer. During this time Peter speaks to a gathering of about 120 persons. Since Judas left the fold, another apostle is needed to bear witness to the resurrection so the group appoints one. Peter may have intuited that another witness would be important because a crowd is gathering in Jerusalem to celebrate the upcoming harvest

celebration, or Pentacost. It's a good time to spread the word. Witnesses would be a good thing.

Pentacost (or Feast of Weeks) is the fourth annual festival for the Jewish community. Leviticus Chapter 23 tells us what was required in terms of offerings for each of the seven major annual festivals. For this festival, one needed two loaves of leavened bread made of the finest flour; nine one year old male lambs without defect; a bull of the herd; two rams; and one male goat. This is a lot of meat. Information about who was allowed to eat what when is hard to pin down. But even if they were allowed to eat one third of the offering, it's a lot of food. This is a good thing because the festival is drawing a lot of folks. There were Parthians, Elamites, Mesopotamians. Folks from

Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome. There were Cretans and Arabs (and a few other places I couldn't pronounce).

On this day of Pentacost in 33AD, the day that marks the beginning of Christianity, the apostles were all together in one place. On this day there came a great wind and a loud noise, and tongues like fire rested upon the apostles. The multitude hears the sound, they come together and are amazed. They were each hearing the deeds of God spoken in his own language. They each heard God's message in their own language and were amazed.

"They're drunk!" some said.

No, says Peter, they are not drunk and he begins his first public speech. He tells them this is prophecy fulfilled. This is what the prophet Joel spoke of 800 years ago. This is what King David wrote about 1000 years ago. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the Messiah. He performed miracles and signs and yet you are guilty of putting Him to death - you wanted Him dead and death could not hold Him. Jesus is now "exalted to the right hand of God ... and He has poured forth this (miracle) which you now see and hear."

The multitude was "pierced through the heart" and asked, "What shall we do?"

Peter shares the two actions that they were to take which would produce two results. **Action 1, repent or change your mind** about Him. Admit that He is the Lord and

Messiah of the prophets. **Action 2, be baptized** in His name. **Join** the community of those who believe. Come into the fold.

These actions will produce **Result 1**, your sins will be **forgiven**, and **Result 2**, you will **receive** the Holy Spirit.

Peter said, "This is for you and your children... Be saved from this perverse generation!" (The generation that allowed Jesus to be crucified).

Peter presents these two results as unfolding automatically after the two actions are taken. For me, this begs more reflection.

But, on that day of Pentacost in 33AD, 3000 were

baptized. On the day of Pentacost in 33AD, Christianity began.