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A0850 – December 14, 2008 – Acts 11:1-18 – The Doctrine Of The Church

Acts 11:1-18 Ἦκουσαν δὲ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ οἱ ὄντες κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἐδέξαντο τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ. ²Ὅτε δὲ ἀνέβη Πέτρος εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, διεκρίνοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς ³λέγοντες ὅτι εἰσήλθες πρὸς ἄνδρας ἀκροβυστίαν ἔχοντας καὶ συνέφαγες αὐτοῖς. ⁴Ἀρξάμενος δὲ Πέτρος ἐξετίθετο αὐτοῖς καθεξῆς λέγων· ⁵ἐγὼ ἤμην ἐν πόλει Ἰόππῃ προσευχόμενος καὶ εἶδον ἐν ἐκστάσει ὄραμα, καταβαῖνον σκευδὸς τι ὡς ὀθόνην μεγάλην τέσσαρσιν ἀρχαῖς καθεμένην ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ἦλθεν ἄχρι ἐμοῦ. ⁶εἰς ἣν ἀτενίσας κατενόουν καὶ εἶδον τὰ τετράποδα τῆς γῆς καὶ τὰ θηρία καὶ τὰ ἕρπετα καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. ⁷ἤκουσα δὲ καὶ φωνῆς λεγούσης μοι· ἀναστάς, Πέτρε, θύσον καὶ φάγε. ⁸εἶπον δὲ· μηδαμῶς, κύριε, ὅτι κοινὸν ἢ ἀκάθαρτον οὐδέποτε εἰσήλθεν εἰς τὸ στόμα μου. ⁹ἀπεκρίθη δὲ φωνὴ ἐκ δευτέρου ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ· ἃ ὁ θεὸς ἐκαθάρισεν, σὺ μὴ κοίνου. ¹⁰τοῦτο δὲ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τρεῖς, καὶ ἀνεσπάσθη πάλιν ἅπαντα εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν. ¹¹καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐξαυτῆς τρεῖς ἄνδρες ἐπέστησαν ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκίαν ἐν ἧ ἤμεν, ἀπεσταλμένοι ἀπὸ Καισαρείας πρὸς με. ¹²εἶπεν δὲ τὸ πνεῦμά μοι συνελθεῖν αὐτοῖς μηδὲν διακρίναντα. ἦλθον δὲ σὺν ἐμοὶ καὶ οἱ ἕξ ἀδελφοὶ οὗτοι καὶ εἰσήλθομεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἀνδρός. ¹³ἀπήγγειλεν δὲ ἡμῖν πῶς εἶδεν [τὸν] ἄγγελον ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ σταθέντα καὶ εἰπόντα· ἀπόστειλον εἰς Ἰόππην καὶ μετάπεμψαι Σίμωνα τὸν ἐπικαλούμενον Πέτρον, ¹⁴ὃς λαλήσει ῥήματα πρὸς σὲ ἐν οἷς σωθήσῃ σὺ καὶ πᾶς ὁ οἶκός σου. ¹⁵ἐν δὲ τῷ ἄρξασθαι με λαλεῖν ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ὡς περ καὶ ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀρχῇ. ¹⁶ἐμνήσθη δὲ τοῦ ῥήματος τοῦ κυρίου ὡς ἔλεγεν· Ἰωάννης μὲν ἐβάπτισεν ὕδατι, ὑμεῖς δὲ βαπτισθήσεσθε ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. ¹⁷εἰ οὖν τὴν ἴσην δωρεὰν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ὡς καὶ ἡμῖν πιστεύσασιν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ἐγὼ τίς ἤμην δυνατὸς κωλύσαι τὸν θεόν; ¹⁸Ἀκούσαντες δὲ ταῦτα ἠσύχασαν καὶ

ἔδοξασαν τὸν θεὸν λέγοντες· ἄρα καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὁ θεὸς τὴν μετάνοιαν εἰς
ζωὴν ἔδωκεν. (NA27)

Acts 11:1-18 Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ²And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, ³saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” ⁴But Peter began *speaking* and *proceeded* to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying, ⁵“I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me, ⁶and when I had fixed my gaze on it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air. ⁷“I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ ⁸“But I said, ‘By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹“But a voice from heaven answered a second time, ‘What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.’ ¹⁰“This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky. ¹¹“And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were *staying*, having been sent to me from Caesarea. ¹²“The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man’s house. ¹³“And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; ¹⁴and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ ¹⁵“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as *He did* upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶“And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷“Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as *He gave* to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” ¹⁸When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life.”

Alright, let’s see what happens when the news gets back to Jerusalem. Verse 1, **Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ²And**

when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, ³saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” Now, what we have here essentially is a conflict in the early church. What Peter did starts a big argument in Jerusalem. I have encountered multiple times Christians who think arguing is wrong, if you argue with someone you’re unspiritual, you’re not filled with the Holy Spirit or something. I think that’s baloney and here’s why. If believers who are filled with the Spirit don’t argue then it would imply that the Spirit gives them infallible insight and that would be perfectionism and that can’t be. Growth has to happen and growth often happens through conflict over some issue that gets resolved. This is an essential part of the believers training. Before I came here I used to spend probably an inordinate amount of time on theological discussion boards. I drove my wife nuts ever night I came home because I brought the discussion home. This went on for 2-3 years and when I came here I compiled all the arguments I wrote and it’s about 2,000 pages of typed arguments on my computer. We argued everything, we argued about tongues, we argued about Spirit baptism, we argued about Lordship Salvation, vs Free Grace, we argued about water baptism, we argued about everything you can possibly argue about. It was done almost always in a gentle spirit and it was done with reverence but it was intense conflict. And I see it as a part of my training, it sharpened me, it forced me to articulate the word of God to other people, explain why I believed what I believed and prove it with Scripture. What good is it really to have a belief over here but you can’t really explain it to someone else? Peter tells us later on in his first epistle that you better be ready to defend your position, you better be ready to give an apology, not an I’m sorry, a defense of the truth, an explanation for why you believe what you believe or why you acted the way you acted in a given circumstance. Peter learned this by experience because when he got back to Jerusalem they jumped on him like a pack of wolves and he had to explain himself, he had to argue why he went into Cornelius’ house and why he sat down at that table. And Peter said later “Be ready to defend what you believe and what you do. We are commanded to always be ready. So discussing and argumentation, as long as it’s done graciously and as long as it’s done with the goal of getting at Scriptural truth, and not just arguing for arguments sake, causes growth, it’s edifying and it’s sanctifying. Let’s watch the process in action and see how we can apply it.

Verse 1, **Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.** The news spread pretty fast into the region of **Judea** which included Jerusalem. This was all the region around Jerusalem, a rather large area. They didn’t have internet or television but the news still got around rather quickly into this region. If we could get a headline it would probably read something like

this, "God Accepts Dogs into Heaven." That was the headline that was floating around. The Jews had a real problem with Gentiles. Some rabbinic commentators said that the Gentiles were the kiln that God used to start the fires of hell. So this was revolutionary news. Verse 2, **And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, took issue** is a little weak, it means they were firmly opposed to him, an inceptive imperfect and it means no sooner had he got in town than they all ganged up on him, verbally assaulted him, and this went on and on, there wasn't a leader, they just all went at him.

If you're not careful you'll read verse 2 as saying well, they're just Jews. No, that's not so because all the Christians were Jews at this point, so **those who were circumcised** are Christian Jews and understanding that we have the first faction of legalists in the Christian Church. These people are going to be around for awhile in the NT, the whole book of Galatians is about these Jewish Christians that said, "Gentiles can come into the Church, but they have to come through circumcision, it's faith plus circumcision and they're not saved until we have their flesh." Now, there are a lot of ideas floating around about legalism and we want to straighten those out because some people have the idea that if you ever mention a law and say "This is the standard," then you're a legalist. And that's not the case at all.

So let's look at the legalist crowd vs the licentious crowd. Everyone has a tendency toward one of these crowds. You may take the licentious route and I may take the legalist route. And you may think I'm sinful and I may think you're sinful. But they're both equally sinful. Neither is better than the other as a principle of spiritual growth, of sanctification. There are two things you have to have to grow, to be sanctified. One is the law; that is the word of God, the content of God's will. No one can ever grow without taking in the word of God, no matter how many prayer meetings you go to, no matter how many hymns you sing, no matter how many testimonial meetings you attend, that will not sanctify you. The only thing that will sanctify you is when you take in the word of God, period. That's an absolute statement that can be defended from the word of God. The word of God is the means of sanctification.

But there's something else that's also necessary and that is God's grace; God has got to enable you to attain the standards of the law or the standards of His word, whether it's the OT standards, the law of Moses or the New Testament standards, the law of Christ, it doesn't make any difference, grace is still needed. So two elements are continually needed: one the standard and

two the means to reach the standard. Those are always the keys to sanctification. Now there are side benefits, there's contentment, there's peace, there's the fruit of the Spirit that accompany this, but we're looking now at the mechanisms involved, grace and law.

Now the legalist and the licentious person have grace and law out of balance, they tend to overemphasize one or the other. Let's take the legalist. The legalist do, or try to do, without grace. This is operation flesh, its pure performance, operation boot strap, put on a show in front of everybody else, put on your fake smile and you're a spiritual giant. You can always see this in those people who go beyond the biblical standards. For example, I grew up in Baptist circles and the Baptists don't believe in dancing. If you're caught dancing you're a heathen. I always point out, "Show me a verse, show me a passage, give me a reason I can't dance. David danced in the ephod. Why can't I dance?" "Oh, it's not spiritual?" "Why is it not spiritual?" And it always comes down to some phoney standard. Now some forms of dancing are wrong, some music is wrong for that matter, but are there really no forms of dancing that reflect the biblical standard?

So, what has Mr Legalist done? Mr Legalist has destroyed grace because he's defined spiritually independent of grace, it's all produced by the energy of the flesh. So the legalist lowers the law and eliminates grace; that's always what he does, you can always test for legalism this way. It may take you a little while to check it out but if you come across this kind of behavior pattern being imposed upon a Christian group some place, ask yourself, is this a Scriptural standard or is this less than a Scriptural standard?

Then the licentious person, what does the licentious person try to do? He catches on to the word grace and he wants to eliminate the requirements of God's will from his life and so he talks about grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, and very carefully he redefines sin so that what he's doing is not sin, maybe it's the way he's doing it. Take the Christian businessman and he has his product and he's trying to sell his product and so he gives the pitch and it's all the great things about his product and the customer says, "Now Mr. Businessman, what about this?" And Mr. Businessman very carefully steers him away from those things, lessens their importance, something and by doing this he never tells him the weaknesses of the product. And thinks to himself; I haven't lied, I withheld information but that's not lying. But do you

not see that in effect you have lied, you have not been straightforward, you have deceived. That's the licentious person, always re-defining, re-defining re-defining sin so that the way I did it was not sin. You're only fooling yourself, everybody else can see what you're doing is sin. So these people end up basically doing away with God's standard altogether all in the name of grace of course. You can do whatever you want as long as you do it this way. Both the legalist and the licentious believer generate a false spirituality. One emphasizes law to the exclusion of grace, the other grace to the exclusion of law. But both are operating via the flesh and therefore neither can effect spiritual growth, you have to have both law and grace to get the growth. Law, there is a standard, God's will for my life in the word of God and then grace, grace, being the enablement to accomplish His will for my life. Because I can no more do it by my own strength than I can cause the planets to rotate. The flesh cannot carry out the will of God, that's why the grace of God is necessary.

Now let's apply this to the situation at hand, Peter's been to Cornelius' house. Cornelius received the word of God. But Cornelius wasn't circumcised. That's basically the problem in verse 3, say Peter, **"You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."** Now to them the physical act of circumcision is the big issue. But as legalists what have they done. They've done what the legalists always does, they lower the standard so the flesh can keep it. Anyone can take a knife and cut the flesh. It doesn't take the grace of God to do that. But what did God want, what was the real standard? God in the OT was using physical circumcision only as a picture of what was happening inwardly spiritually. There was a spiritual circumcision of the heart; Deuteronomy 10 for example. Other passages: Deuteronomy 30. There was always a spiritual reality behind the physical picture and it was the spiritual circumcision, that's what God wanted. He never intended for the physical circumcision to become the end all, but that's these circumcised Jews were doing; they weren't concentrating on the state of the spirit, they were concentrating on the state of Cornelius' body. And thus they were legalists and they attacked Peter.

Now Peter had in fact gone in to uncircumcised men, he had eaten with them. But Peter had learned in the vision that God accepted Jew and Gentile purely on the basis of grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He had been there and seen it himself. It wasn't necessary to circumcise them, he

preached the word and in the middle of a sentence the Spirit fell on them. There was nothing Peter could do. Once that happened what was he going to do, "Alright boys, pull down your pants, you've got to have surgery?" He couldn't do that. They were already regenerated. To do that would have been to invalidate God's grace. So in verse 4 lets see how he argues his case and there are some principles for arguing here. Some of you because you get so eager because you learned something, for once in your life someone actually opened up the word of God to you, and you're so anxious to witness to people you run up to them and start ramming, cramming and jamming truth down someone's throat. They didn't even ask a question, they don't even know what the question is, let alone the answer you're giving them. And that's not right, that's not giving a defense. If that's you and all you're interested in is ruffling people's feathers, that's not the right spirit. Then there's those of you who would never argue a point of spiritual truth, and that I want to convince you is just as unspiritual, because we have Christians who show up week after week with their smiley faces and sort of bumble around here in a holy trance, so spiritual, never argue about anything, never talk about what the truth is, never discuss what God said. Do you see Peter in verse 4 with that mentality? Now boys, you believe you're way and I believe my way, let's not get into it. You go your way and God bless you and I'll go my way and God bless me. And notice one other thing about verse 4; Peter is an apostle, but he doesn't turn off the discussion by saying "Well, I'm an apostle, you take it from me bud!" Is that how he handles the situation? I said it, kiss my big toe! It says, **Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence**, that phrase there **orderly sequence** comes from Luke 1:3 when Luke tells Theophilus, "I've investigated everything and I lay it out for you in consecutive order. These are the facts of history Theophilus, and I give them to you in their orderly sequence."

In verses 5-6 he tells them where he was and the vision he saw which involved the dietary code of the OT. The voice he heard in verse 7, his response in verse 8, verses 9-10, this happened three times. Peter, unlike most of us who get the menu once in a restaurant, got it three times. Couldn't make up his mind what find he liked. And finally, verse 11, look at what Peter pulls out as significant, "**And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house**, he recognizes the timing was providentially arranged. When those three men appeared at the house it clicked with Peter, "Aha, I got it Lord, I'm going to the Gentiles, and I submit, I come under your

authority, under your commandment.” Verse 12, **The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings** and that’s a weak translation, **misgivings**, because Luke is trying to point something out you miss in the English translation because the words in verse 2, when the circumcised jumped him, it says they “took issue with him,” that’s the word used in verse 12, Peter, you go with them without taking issue. Don’t fight them Peter, you go without a fight, don’t worry, you’ll get to the fight later. Now the fights been brought to him and he’s answering the fight. And he’s got back up, he’s got a whole gang behind him. Who did he bring along in verse 12? **These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man’s house.** These are his witnesses. They all went into the house, it wasn’t just Peter. He only needed two men to get every fact confirmed but He’s got six, which evidently shows you Peter knew the fight he would face and so when he went back to Jerusalem he made sure he told all six of these men, “You stay with me, don’t leave my side. You’re my witnesses and a fight is coming.” And it did.

Verses 13-14 he recounts the double vision, Cornelius had a vision too. Not only do I have six witnesses, there were two visions. This isn’t just my fantasy, all seven of us heard the testimony. He gave us a report, **how he had seen the angel in his house saying**, “Call for Simon **who is called Peter...verse 14, and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.**’ Verse 14 he tells us something very valuable about salvation. He says that Cornelius, though he was positive to the word of God, though he prayed to God, though he gave alms to the Jewish people, he had done so many good works. Was that enough to be saved? Not at all. So next time you think about how great some person is, all the things they do for the church, all the time they spend in their prayer closet, just think, a person can do all that and never be saved. That’s Cornelius, a person can be that positive to the word of God and not be saved. A person can be that attracted to truth and yet never have trusted in Jesus Christ. Now that’s sobering. How many people have you just assumed were the genuine article because they kneeled down at an altar or carried a Bible? You can get faked out. And another thing here. On one hand **saved** is passive voice, you’re not going to save yourself, that would be active voice, you’re going to be saved by someone else, and that someone else is not Peter at the pearly gates, it’s God, God is the one who does the saving and He does it when a person believes. Salvation is a gift, if we could do it ourselves it wouldn’t be a gift. All we do is receive it, it’s just like a Christmas present, it’s just handed to you, no strings

attached. And the means of receiving salvation is the **words**, the **words**, specifically of the gospel, but the word of God is the instrument, the word of God is the power of God unto salvation. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. No matter how long Cornelius sat there and prayed and contemplated his navel he wouldn't move one inch toward salvation because that comes only by the word of God. And another thing I found interesting about this is this was all communicated by an angel. If that is so why didn't the angel just give the gospel to Cornelius? You gave him all this but not the gospel? That's right. Because the witnessing, in every case I can find in Scripture, except one in the Tribulation, is always left to human beings, it's a human responsibility. You can never stand around your family and friend twiddling your thumbs saying, "If God's elected them they'll be saved." That's not a scriptural way of thinking. That's laziness. God is sovereign but He's not going to do your job for you. You wouldn't have a job to do if He wasn't sovereign. That's why we gather here three times a week, to train in the word of God so you'll know you to do your job, train in the word of God so you can know how do I answer this objection to Christianity, what's the fallacy of this argument. Why do we do all that? So we can witness to people. As my father-in-law said, "Train hard, witness easy." Don't waste your time here. I give you more than enough material to chew on each week. There's no excuse.

Alright, verse 15, "**And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.**" **I began to speak.** What that means is that Peter had just started the sermon. He hadn't even told them everything he wanted to tell them. But it doesn't mean he just read verse 34-43. Remember, that's a summary of what he said, he likely went into the four or five OT passages and explained all this to them, but still in his mind when the **Holy Spirit fell on them**, he had just **began to speak**. This shows you how far we've fallen in 20 centuries. When I was in Campus Crusade for Christ back at the university we'd station ourselves outside the dorms and pass out a survey. Then when we got them all in we'd go to the rooms we thought had some interest in things of God. And in preparation for this we were trained in the four spiritual laws, the whole thing takes about 3 minutes to go through. And so you'd knock on the door, "Is Jason here, yeah, I'm Jason." Hey Jason, I'm Jeremy, you filled out this survey card, I'm following up, "God has a wonderful plan for your life, You a sinner, Christ died for you, now will you pray a prayer with me." And I remember one time a guy asked a question, and I didn't have a clue what to say, but we'd been

prepped for this, and what you were supposed to do is just brush that aside and say, “Hey, save that for later, right now let me just get through this.” It was like witnessing was a race, who can get to the end without answering any questions. And I never got comfortable with this. I didn’t know why at the time but I know something wasn’t right. But looking back people can’t force themselves to believe, if they’ve got questions they need to have them answered. No one can just believe when they’ve got a hang-up. These things have to be dealt with. People have to think this through, you have to give them time and it can take weeks, months, years of working with a person till it clicks. So what Peter considered the beginning of what he was going to say was about an hour into this thing. Today we try to cover the whole thing in three minutes? And that’s the contrast between an intellectual generation and an anti-intellectual one. We’re so stupid today we think we can get genuine conversions in a three minute escapade. In fact, it’s so bad and we’ve bought in to so much secular philosophy that Christianity is just something you believe, by which is meant, Christianity is completely irrational. It can’t be understood, it can’t be thought about it, it’s just a feeling, something in the upper story of non-reason that you leap out for in hope that it will give some meaning in life. Not so in the Scriptures. Faith is rational, faith is based on true historical events expressed in propositional language and as Peter spoke of these space-time historical events that Cornelius and his house understood and believed...**the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning**, notice that phrase **just as He did upon us at the beginning**. That’s a crucial phrase. When Peter saw this happen to Cornelius and his household and they went into Aramaic tongues his mind flashed immediately back to what had happened to the Jews on Pentecost, inferring we might add, that tongues was not a common experience, he had only see this on two prior occasions, Acts 2 and Acts 8, he mentions Acts 2 because he’s speaking to a Jewish audience. What’s he saying? There was no difference between what we Jewish apostles experienced in Acts 2 and what the Gentile converts experienced in Acts 10.

at the beginning, that’s a reference to Acts 2. We want to elaborate on this so let’s read through verse 17, “**And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’**”¹⁷“**Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ**, and the gift there is baptism of the Holy Spirit. So now you have both

Jews and Gentiles baptized by the Spirit and observe v 17, this happened **after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ**. This is one thing that is uniform throughout the Book of Acts and that is no one is baptized by the Spirit until after they had believed. Now there may have been years between the moment a person believed and when they receive the Spirit, as in the case of the apostles, they had believed in the Messiahship of Jesus for years but they were not **baptized with the Spirit** until Acts 2. Granted that's not the norm, the norm is a person believes and they are immediately baptized by the Spirit. So, having made those observations we want to break from the verse by verse and go into the origin of the Church, the body of the Messiah. I'm going to say it that way rather than the body of Christ because you're so accustomed to the term Christ it's become meaningless to you. We're talking about the promised Messiah. Turn to Acts 2.

Some of you were shocked I didn't go into this in Acts 2. All your life you've been in Bible teaching churches and you were taught that Acts 2, the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2 is the origin of the Church, and I told you for now I want you to forget that, forget what you were taught, forget what you know from Paul in the epistles because in Acts 2 we wanted to get something no other church gets, and that's a true historical perspective. What did Peter, Matthias and the other apostles think when the Day of Pentecost came? What did they think was happening? Did they think of the church? I'll stand toe to toe with anyone dispensationalist who thinks they can prove the apostles thought of the Church. This event has to be viewed through a Jewish lens and not primarily through a Church lens. And though this has rarely been the approach to Acts 2 I think its essential to understanding Acts 2:38, the most controversial verse in the NT, "repent and be baptized," that's a Jewish message, that's a kingdom message, that relates to the feasts of Israel and in particular the feast of Pentecost. So let's review Israel's feasts.

Pentecost is one of the great feasts in the spring cycle of Israel's calendar. Israel had a spring cycle to her calendar and she had a fall cycle to her calendar so that nationally the Jew, by celebrating his national holidays would have to review God's plan of history and in reviewing God's plan of history all the major events would be covered. So in the spring first you had Passover; Passover reviewed the Exodus, it reviewed salvation from judgment by blood atonement, a very vital truth that would be preparing them for the cross work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lev 23:5). Next you had the

Feast of Firstfruits and that was celebrated on the day after the Sabbath after Passover (Lev 23:11b). So the first holiday was Passover, the second holiday was Firstfruits and then fifty days later you had the holiday of Pentecost, the third day in the spring cycle (Lev 23:15-16). Those are three holidays that every Jew celebrated every year. Every time spring would come they'd celebrate Passover, Firstfruits and Pentecost; Passover, Firstfruits and Pentecost, year after year after year.

Now, God was training them in their history but also setting them up for the future, these holidays had prophetic significance and when God wanted to finish them off He fulfilled them. The Feast of Passover was fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ who died exactly on the day of Passover in 33AD. Paul tells us that in 1 Cor 5:6-8. So Jesus Christ died in fulfillment of the Exodus, He paid the price for your sin and mine on the very day when substitutionary blood atonement was introduced into history at the Exodus. Next you have the Feast of Firstfruits, the sequence was, Passover, then comes the next Sabbath, and the day after the Sabbath, that was Firstfruits, so you had Passover, Sabbath, and then Firstfruits, the Firstfruits was the first of your crops and you'd bring that before the Lord and wave it and it was a guarantee of more to follow, a great harvest, that feast was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. He was the first resurrected according to Paul in 1 Cor 15:20 and thus He is the guarantee of a great harvest of saints to follow in the resurrection. How did Paul argue the case? If Christ is not resurrected then you are still in your sins, and we who believe in a historical fiction, are most to be pitied. So the resurrection better be a historical reality or Christianity isn't worth believing. So the first two events of the spring calendar had been fulfilled. Christ had died fulfilling Passover; Christ had risen from the dead fulfilling the day of Firstfruits.



Now we come to the third feast, the Feast of Pentecost. Now although the New Testament says quite explicitly that Jesus Christ died and roes again in fulfillment of those first two days, the Bible does not explicitly say that Pentecost has been fulfilled. There's no statement in the New Testament to that effect. And the question is "Why not?" We know God intended to fulfill Pentecost in Acts 2, "Why wasn't it fulfilled?" And this is what makes Acts 2 so complicated, God's plan is clearly unfolding very rapidly, you've got fulfillment of Passover then fulfillment of Firstfruits and what you expect is fulfillment of Pentecost but it doesn't happen. Something happens, that something happens in Acts 2, Acts 8 and Acts 10. But it wasn't the fulfillment of Pentecost. And we said, the basic reason it was not fulfilled was because the nation Israel did not repent. See, Acts 2:38, contrary to the Church of Christ who sets this up as the end all verse of Christianity, really has no application whatsoever to us today, it has every application to the 1st century Jew. The message is no different than what John the Baptist came preaching and what the Lord Jesus Christ came preaching, "repent and be baptized, for the kingdom of God is at hand," and the kingdom of God is not the Church. That's a great confusion people have today because for 18 centuries we've had replacement theology in the Roman Catholic Church, the idea that the Church replaces Israel, the idea that the Church is the Kingdom and so the Pope is Christ's substitute on earth and we've had a state church ever since, largely in Europe for centuries but extending today deep into the political structure of South America and coupled with Marxist-Leninist Communism it has produced nothing but oppression, nothing but poverty and you go into these countries and the people are living in houses with dirt floors but the Church is laden in gold and you wonder, what is the problem? What is going on here? What's going on is a confusion of the church with the kingdom. The kingdom is Jewish and I beg your pardon but the Jews have not had a kingdom in the last 2500 years. You can't tear away what was promised to one people, the Jews, and give it to another people, the Church. That's not how contracts work. Contracts are legal documents, they have terms and those terms have to be fulfilled to the parties of the contract. And God promised a kingdom to the nation Israel so it can only be fulfilled to the nation Israel. And that's precisely what was being offered to the nation Israel on the day of Pentecost. God was saying, "Are you ready Israel? Are you prepared spiritually? The kingdom can come if you are prepared." Were they prepared? Did they repent nationally in Acts 2:38? No, only 3000 repented

But national repentance was the condition for the coming of the kingdom, national repentance. If the nation had repented then the King would return, destroy the Roman Empire and all other human empires and set up His kingdom over all the earth. Then He would pour out His Spirit on the Jewish nation, fulfilling the new covenant. That didn't happen in Acts 2 and the reason it didn't happen in Acts 2 is because the nation did not repent. Therefore, what was scheduled to occur on that Pentecost did not occur and awaits future fulfillment. What did happen was something else but we had to tackle all that material to get the true historical perspective of Pentecost. Nobody knew what the something else was. Peter got a glimpse of it when he recognized one point of similarity between Joel 2 and Acts 2, and that is, a pouring out of the Spirit had occurred, but none of the other things in Joel 2 happened. And so what we have in Acts 2, Acts 8 and Acts 10 with the tongues is an evidence that the Spirit had been poured out on these three people groups, Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. But that's not the kingdom, this is the something else, yes the Spirit has been poured out but no the kingdom hasn't come.

So now we want to finally get to the something else, the Church, not well understood by the apostles until years later. Acts 11:15. There are hints in early Acts of this new entity but no extensive revelation regarding the nature of the Church. Acts 11:15 is a *crux interpretum*, that means you better highlight this verse and I'll tell you why, someone, somewhere down the line is going to challenge you on the Acts 2 origin of the Church. Well, you say, what difference does it make? Well, let's take the Acts 28 position, extreme dispensationalism. If that is so then the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper are no longer relevant. Further, all of Paul's non-prison epistles, have no reference to the Christian Church, that means Galatians is not for you, 1 and 2 Thessalonians is not for you, 1 and 2 Corinthians is not for you, that was just for the early Jewish Church. That's the extreme view. The moderate view says, "The Church didn't start in Acts 2 or Acts 28 but somewhere in between, Acts 9 or Acts 13, which is basically with Paul, they can't agree among themselves which event in Paul's life, was it Paul's conversion in Acts 9 or Paul's missionary journeys in Acts 13, but they flat out deny Acts 2, they know that for sure, therefore again because you cut out that period of revelation as having any relevance to the Church you cut out water baptism and you slice up Paul's epistles, some are for us, some are not. But both these groups, and I respect much of what they say, they've made

some good observations, but both I think, make a crucial error. And that is, that the shift from Israel to the Church, the change in dispensation from Law to Grace does not depend on what man understands but what God has done. In other words, they always make the argument that no one understood the church until Paul and therefore the church could not have begun until Paul. The mistake is that a dispensation does not shift when man understands what God has done, but when God has actually done it. I freely admit Peter and the apostles didn't understand what was happening in Acts 2. But the issue is, what had God done, what was that something else. If He didn't establish the kingdom what did He establish? And I think you're hard pressed to not conclude that He established the Church. Later, after that God revealed to Paul and others bits and pieces about the Church, Paul's going to be the main guy that brings us that revelation. But that's secondary to when it was established. So we want to see why we say Church Acts 2 not before, not after. How do we get Acts 2 as the main event?

Let's cover this under four points. First point, the baptism of the Holy Spirit first happened in Acts 2. Two passages show this, Acts 11:15-16, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as *He did* upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶"And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" The problem here is when was "the beginning?" Obviously the people, the "us" were the Jews, it wasn't Paul, Paul's not the object. So when was "the beginning?" Well note that verse 16 is a quote, look in your margin and see where that quote comes from? What did you find? You should see Acts 1:5 somewhere in the mix. So turn to Acts 1:5. "for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." That's what Peter remembered, what the Lord said in Acts 1:5. And the baptism of the Holy Spirit, according to Acts 1:5 was "not many days from now." According to 11:15 it had already happened. So you're forced to conclude that the beginning is somewhere between Acts 1 and Acts 11. The only logical place is Acts 2. It doesn't say it happened in Acts 2, I grant that, but you suggest to me another more viable position. So we conclude that the first time the Holy Spirit baptized anyone was Acts 2. But that doesn't seal the deal. The question we have to ask now is, "What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" Obviously it is a ministry of God the Spirit but what does it accomplish?

So our second point is the baptism of the Spirit places a person in the body of Messiah. 1 Cor 12:13. First point, the baptism of the Spirit first happened in Acts 2, second point, the baptism of the Spirit puts a person inside the body of Messiah. Verse 13, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks," How many bodies? Two bodies? No, one body, the body of Messiah, when we say Spirit baptism we're not talking about being indwelt by the Spirit, we're not talking about speaking in tongues, we're not talking about a second experience for power. We're talking about something that places the believer into the body of Messiah. You don't feel it, it's not a feeling, it's a position. It's positional truth that applies to all believers. If you're a believer you have the Spirit and are in the body of Messiah. If you do not have the Spirit you are not a believer, it's that simple.

Now, logically let's go through the implications of this and then we'll move to the final point. Logically let's think of the implications of this, if Spirit baptism did not begin until Acts 2 then could the body of Messiah have begun before Acts 2? Obviously not since to be baptized by the Spirit is to be put into the body of Messiah. Therefore Adam was not in the body of Messiah, Noah was not, Moses was not, John the Baptist was not. They were believers but they were not in the body of Messiah. They were not baptized by the Holy Spirit, they couldn't have possibly been, they all died before Acts 2.

But there's a third point that has to be made and that is "What is the body of Messiah?" The body of Messiah is the Church. Col 1:24. There are other passages but I take you to Colossians this time because I've taken you to Ephesians on prior occasions. Col 1:24, is the body of Messiah something separate from the Church or is it the Church? In other words, can we make a split here? Can we say the body of Messiah started in Acts 2 but the Church didn't start until Acts 9 or 13? Verse 24, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church," So His body, the body of Messiah, is the Church. It's very difficult to get around these verses so let's summarize what we've said. Point one, the baptism of the Spirit could not have happened before Acts 1 or after Acts 11. Logically there's no other locus but Acts 2. Second point, baptism of the Spirit places a person in the body of Messiah. It's not some great experience where you go into blah, blah, blah and if you didn't go blah, blah, blah you're not really saved. The third point is simply that the body of the Messiah is the Church, that's Eph 1 and Col 1.

And what we, in the big scheme conclude from this, is that the Church is something distinct from Israel, it's a new entity composed of Jew and Gentile, it's not the kingdom, it's not spiritual Israel, it's not a new Israel, it's the body of the Messiah, it doesn't require circumcision, Cornelius didn't have a knife pulled on him, it's simply by faith, at that moment you enter the Church, an organism that is being built up numerically and spiritually until the Messiah retrieves her from the earth. That all started on the day Pentecost, Jews entered first in Acts 2, then the Samaritans in Acts 8 and then the Gentiles in Acts 10, they came in step by step in the book of Acts which is another way you see the theme of transition. But at each increment you get the same evidence in conjunction with the baptism of the Spirit, and that's the speaking in new languages, untrained languages. It's not true that every time someone believed they went into this. It's just these three occasions and because these three groups shared this it pointed to unity, unity of the new organism. God was not interested in setting up rival churches but one Church, we're baptized into one body, the body of Messiah

And finally, what was the result of this in verse 18? What was the result of the big argument with Peter? **they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."** And this is going to have a number of repercussions we'll get into more next time. But the point we want to make today is that arguments when resolved on the basis of the word of God, looking at the objective evidence under the supervision of the word of God, results in spiritual growth, growth that will move you out of your legalistic or licentious tendency which is God's will for all believers of the Church.

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