



Lessons for Today from the Early Church

What can we learn from the Early Church?



Introduction

- What experiences have you had with Church?
- What picture do we have in our minds as to what Church should be like?
- Why does Church not seem to be what we have in our minds, what we would expect or what we sometime see in Scripture?
- Do we need to adjust our mental image of what Church should be like?
- What is Church anyway?
- It really is just a number of people who have congregated, members of a faith community.
- *congregation or church as the totality of Christians living and meeting in a particular locality or larger geographical area, but not necessarily limited to one meeting place*
 - Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, eds. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. 3d, Accordance electronic edition, version 2.8. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Pentecost

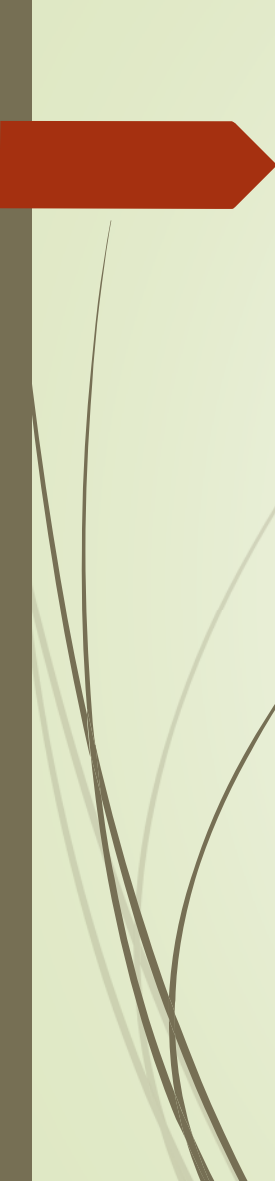
- ▶ Let's read Acts 2:1-47, 4:27-37
- ▶ What stands out in these passages?
- ▶ Who are the people in this passage?
- ▶ 11 apostles, other disciples and women – it seems to be the core group of believers who were really dedicated.
- ▶ They were **continually devoting themselves to prayer.**
- ▶ The 120 were filled with the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Acts 2:5-11 tells us that the Jews that were in Jerusalem listening were “devout” and were from many different places.
- ▶ Is there any significance to who these people are?
- ▶ What role does their character play?
- ▶ What is this speaking in tongues?
- ▶ Are these “tongues” different from those mentioned in Corinthians?




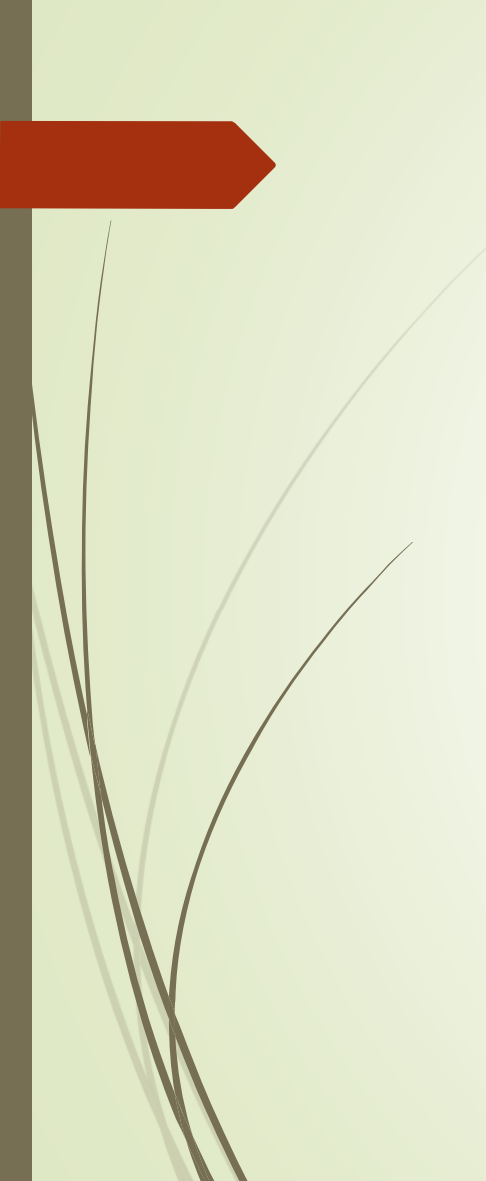


Pentecost

- According to the Jewish calendar all males were obligated to appear before the Lord three times each year (Dt. 16:16). Pentecost was the second of these national festivals and took place fifty days or seven full weeks after Passover (vv. 9f.). It was designated the “feast of weeks” since it concluded the interval that began with the presentation of the first harvest sheaves, thereby marking the end of the grain harvest.
 - GLASSER, A. F. Bromiley, Geoffrey W., ed. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Revised). Accordance electronic edition, version 1.4. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.

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- ▶ Peter presents the message of the cross as a fulfillment of prophecy
 - ▶ What are the key points that Peter uses?
 - ▶ Peter was able to use Scripture because he was talking to a people that were familiar with the Old Testament and were devout.
 - ▶ He could use Scripture to explain the outpouring of the Spirit.
 - ▶ He used Scripture to explain who the Holy One is.
 - ▶ He preached repentance
 - ▶ Those who believed and repented were radically changed. They had really internalized their faith.
 - ▶ Again, we read that the believers were **continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers** (2:42ff)

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- It would appear that Luke ties the Holy Spirit's doing miracles to the devotion of the believers.
 - Does it seem that Luke ties this devotion to the change in the lives of the believers?
 - What was this "having all things in common" in 2:44
 - What was the selling of property and possessions and dividing them up in 2:45?
 - *"By this we have known love, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."* (1 John 3:16-18 LSB)
 - How would that look today? What is a need? How is our society different from theirs?
 - Why does it seem that churches seem to decline from this initial good stage?
 - What can we do to prevent decline? What keeps us from being so devout?
 - 4:29-31 – earnest prayer and desire for confidence to speak the Word and for signs and wonders.

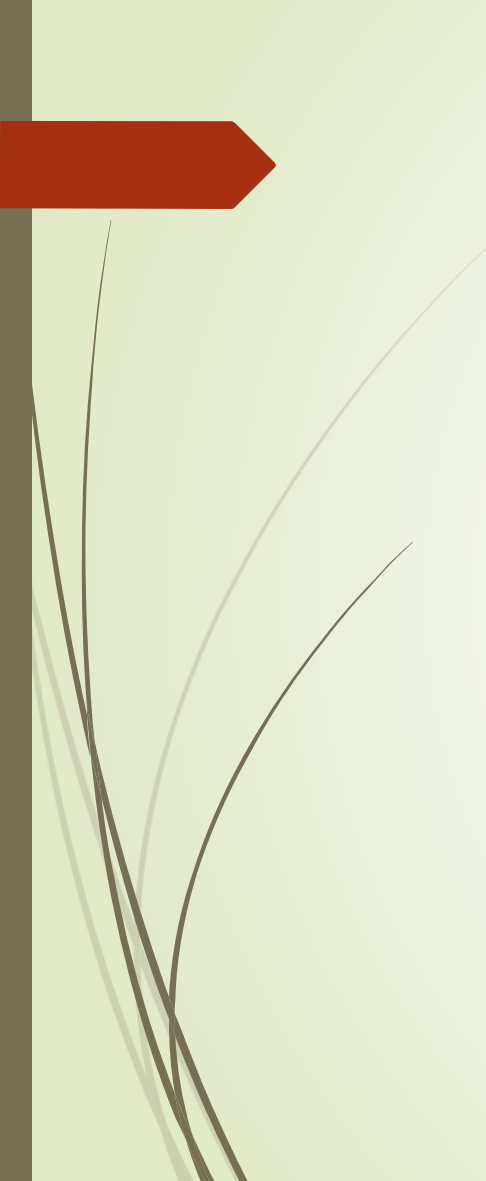



“And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were dividing them up with all, as anyone might have need. And daily devoting themselves with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:43-47 LSB)

What is this fear that came upon them?

φόβος G5832 (*phobos*), terror, fear, reverence, respect, awe;

Silva, Moisés, ed. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 2nd; Accordance electronic edition, version 1.7. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

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- “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and not one was saying that any of his possessions was his own, but, for them, everything was common. And with great power the apostles were bearing witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.” (Acts 4:32-35 LSB)
 - What is the take-away from this?
 - How would we best describe this early church?



Ananias & Sapphira

- ▶ Let's read Acts 4:32-5:16
- ▶ Discuss what is going on here
- ▶ What was the issue with Ananias and Sapphira?
- ▶ How was this lying dealt with?
- ▶ What was the result of the judgement of God?
- ▶ What can we learn from this?