

Pastor's Bible Study
Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
October 15, 2009

Acts 2:1—8:40

A. Opening prayer

Gracious God,
Your promises of old have been fulfilled.
The good news of your love has been revealed to us in your Son.
Enable us to trust and accept this good news, to repent and believe.
Teach us as we study your Word together. Amen.

B. The Coming of the Holy Spirit and Characteristics of the Early Church

1. In Acts 2, Luke notes that on the Day of Pentecost, the 120 believers were gathered “together.” Some translations render this as “in one accord.” In either case, the idea is that there was *unity* among the followers of Jesus. What does this say about unity?
2. Peter's speeches are a prominent feature in Acts 2 and 3. Both chapters show Peter preaching (proclaiming) the gospel to fellow Israelites. The Greek word used in the New Testament for preaching or proclaiming is κήρυγμα (*kerygma*).
3. The content of Peter's proclamation is very important. The following list is based on theologian C.H. Dodd's summary of early church *kerygma*:
 - a) The prophecies are fulfilled, and the new age is inaugurated by the coming of Christ (Messiah).
 - b) He was born of the seed of David.
 - c) He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us out of the present evil age.
 - d) He was buried.
 - e) He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.
 - f) He is exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God and Lord of quick and dead.
 - g) He will come again as Judge and Savior of men.
5. Discussion Question: “How does the *kerygma* of the early church compare with preaching in our Methodist churches today? What are the similarities? What are the differences? Name some reasons for these differences?”
6. An important characteristic of the early church was “wonders and signs” (see Acts 2:43). Based on what you have read so far in the Book of Acts, what was the main purpose of these wonders and signs?

7. In Acts 4:23-31 the people gathered to pray. They asked the Lord to grant that they speak the Word with _____. Did the Lord answer their prayer? (see Acts 4:31)

8. As noted earlier, one characteristic of the early believers was unity. One way this was expressed was in sharing material good. This is seen in Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-37. The term for this way of handing goods is “community of goods.” Name some things we do today that is similar to the early church practice of sharing goods.

9. In Acts 6, the twelve disciples came together to appoint seven men to take on the responsibility of doing what? _____. This was done in order to allow the disciples to devote themselves to _____ and to _____.

10. Half of Acts 6 and all of Acts 7 tell the story of one of the seven chosen men. This man is recognized as the first person to give his life for the sake of gospel of Jesus Christ. His name is _____. How was he killed? _____.

11. Near the end of Acts 7 and the first part of Acts 8 a man named Saul is mentioned. We are not told anything about him except that he aided and approved of the killing of the man mentioned in question 10, and that he was involved in the persecution of those who accepted Jesus as Messiah. Why do you think Luke mentions Saul at this point in the Book of Acts?

12. In Acts 8, there is the story of a man named Simon. Later tradition would assign him the name Simon Magus (or Simon the magician). Describe Simon’s sin. Why was Peter so firm with Simon?

13. Acts 8 closes with Philip explaining scripture to an Ethiopian eunuch, whom he soon baptizes. After Philip was finished baptizing the man, what happened? What does this story of Philip and the Ethiopian tell us about how God deals with people?