

# New Beginnings

The Story: part 28  
Apostles and Epistles, part 1  
April 23, 2017

## DAY 1: The mission

1. Throughout human history, God has been searching for lost children. In the Old Testament the central plan was to raise up a nation, Israel, that would be a testimony to the nations around them of the blessings of having God in their lives.
2. More often than not, Israel turned out to be an example of the power of sin in spite of having God's continuing efforts to reach out to them.
3. The death and resurrection of Jesus opened a wide door for a shift in reaching out to lost people. Any of God's children can play a part in reaching lost people!
4. The Book of Acts is the second of a two-book set written by Luke. The Book of Acts, written by Luke and addressed to the same person, Theophilus, as his Gospel, describes God finding his lost children through *the church*.
5. Acts 1:8 is the theme verse of Acts.  
*Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and **you shall be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.*
6. When it comes to sharing your faith, many Christians get antsy. Sometimes we're afraid we're:
  - a. Going to say the wrong thing. (If you do, simply go back and correct what you said).
  - b. Not going to know how to answer a question. (Simply tell the person, "Good question. Let me go do some research and get back with you.")
  - c. Don't think we know enough to even get started. (Just focus on telling your story).
7. The irony is that when Jesus calls us to "witness," what He centrally means is to do what a witness does in a courtroom. Just tell what you've seen and know; nothing more; nothing less. (You are not expected to be an "expert," or to go to seminary to witness).
8. Jot down a few things about how and why you came to faith:

## **DAY 2: Pentecost (Acts 2)**

1. The disciples, 120 of them, wait in Jerusalem as Jesus commanded. Why Jerusalem? Because the Day of Pentecost is approaching and about a million people will be in Jerusalem.

2. On the Day of Pentecost, the 120 disciples hear a mighty wind and are anointed with tongues of fire as the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them. Acts 2:1-4

3. The 120 disciples become cross-cultural missionaries, speaking the wonderful works of God in the languages of the world. Acts 2:5-12

*Acts 2:6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup> Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?"*

4. The burning question became: "What does this mean?" Acts 2:12

5. The Lord-denying disciple, Peter, now filled with the Spirit, boldly declares the meaning of the events of Pentecost: Jesus is alive and he is Lord. Read Acts 2:14-36

*Acts 2:21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*

*Acts 2:31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. <sup>32</sup> God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.*

*Acts 2:36 Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

*<sup>37</sup> When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

*<sup>38</sup> 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.*

*<sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

*<sup>40</sup> With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."*

*<sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

6. Three thousand respond to Peter's explanation by repenting, being baptized, and becoming the first people in the birth of the church. Acts 2:37-41

7. What strikes you most from Peter's message? The response of the people?

### **DAY 3: The early church (Acts 2:42-47)**

1. The massive, diverse, multi-cultural crowd of 3000 believers becomes the unified community—the church. Acts 2:42-47

*Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

*<sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.*

*<sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common.*

*<sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*

*<sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,*

*<sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

2. God is finding his lost children and creating a thriving family.

3. The diversity becomes astounding unity by the presence of the Spirit.

4. There are no singular pronouns in Acts 2:42-27.

5. The church is not a collection of saved individuals; it is a community living in the Spirit of God.

6. The new church met from house-to-house, eating meals together and using their homes as places of God's love.

7. What strikes you most about the early church? Why?

## **DAY 4: Peter and John (Acts 4-8)**

1. The Jewish leaders were greatly disturbed by the growing Christian expansion.

*Acts 4:3 They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. <sup>4</sup> But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.*

2. The next day, Peter and John were interrogated by the Jewish religious leaders. Here was their answer and testimony:

*Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! <sup>9</sup> If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, <sup>10</sup> then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.*

*<sup>11</sup> He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone'.*

3. Peter quotes Psalm 118:22, a verse that every one of those men must have known quite well! Then, Peter adds the stunner:

*Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

4. Throughout human history, mankind has tried every "solution" imaginable to overcome the awful problem of human nature and the awful consequences of our human nature. What has history showed? There is NO lasting solution for the problem of human nature except one: salvation through Jesus Christ.

5. The Jewish leaders threatened Peter and John to speak no more about Jesus. Here was their response:

*Acts 4:19 But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. <sup>20</sup> For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

6. The church continued to grow...

*Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.*

*<sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.*

*<sup>34</sup> There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales <sup>35</sup> and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.*

7. What struck you most from today's verses?

## **DAY 5: The apostle Paul**

1. Saul of Tarsus was converted and became a missionary to the nations in the far reaches of the world. Here is part of his conversion story.

*Acts 9:3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"*

*<sup>5</sup> "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.*

*"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. <sup>6</sup> "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

*<sup>7</sup> The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.*

*<sup>8</sup> Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.*

2. A disciple named Ananias was chosen by God to heal Saul's blindness and carry a message to the new convert!

*Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.*

*<sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."*

3. Ananias laid hands on Saul and he was healed of his blindness.

*Acts 9:18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,*

4. Saul, once the great persecutor of the Christian church, becomes its newest convert. He spends three years in Arabia getting grounded in the faith.

5. His name will change from Saul to Paul, and he will become one of the greatest missionaries in the history of the church.

6. In addition, Paul will pen a dozen New Testament letters, also called "epistles."

7. What has struck you the most about the rise of the early church?