

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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The Acts of the Apostles was called The Acts of the Holy Spirit by some writers including A T Pierson.

The author of the book is Luke, a Gentile who was a medical doctor.

The book deals with the founding of the Church which was born on the Day of Pentecost but had a preparation period of ten days which, with the forty days after the resurrection, makes fifty days. This preparation was made by two events, the ascension of the Lord Jesus and the prayerful waiting on the part of the disciples.

There is no need for us today to wait for the Holy Spirit. He is waiting for us.

The prayer meeting before the Day of Pentecost lasted for ten days and was attended by the apostles and certain women including the mother of the Lord Jesus and also by the brothers of Jesus who now believed. There were 120 present. A new disciple was appointed named Matthias and we read no more of him.

The great day came, the birthday of the church. Of course, there were Christians before Pentecost. People are saved by becoming Christians because of the work of the Holy Spirit. Here in Acts 2 the Spirit was manifested with power, light and the sound of a rushing mighty wind. As far as we know all the believers were Jews for about the first six years after Pentecost.

Now we must distinguish between the Baptism in the Spirit and the filling of the Spirit. Baptism is once for all whereas the filling is a daily or often requirement. We are made Christians by the Baptism by the Spirit.

The filling of the Spirit is oft repeated (Acts 4.31). There is only one Pentecost just as there is only one Calvary. There is only one Baptism in the Spirit and everyone who is saved comes into the benefit of that one Spirit baptism. We are made Christians by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and made Christ-like by the fillings.

The speaking in other languages on this momentous day was not preaching the Gospel but setting out the wonderful works of God. The apostles did not speak because the crowd was there; the crowd came because they were speaking. The utterances were in adoration of the doer of wonderful works.

Peter's sermon followed. It was powerful. It brought a response from 3000 Jews who were baptised. The subject of that sermon was the Lord Jesus and His resurrection and the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel with the pouring of the Spirit upon all flesh and note the emphasis in this sermon is on prophecy, not tongues or healing. This is continued by a day of judgment but whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved (verse 21).

A comparison is made between David and the Lord Jesus and the Lord is elevated to the highest honour.

The appeal is made to the crowd to repent and be baptised and this mass baptism by immersion in water took place and afterwards there were studies in doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. There was also a community spirit and the praise of God and praise is thanksgiving not demonstration.

There was nothing about spiritual gifts or charismata; no requests for, or debate about speaking in tongues. The theme was the resurrection of Jesus Christ and there is no subject more significant. It is the essential for all Christians and it is that that should fill our experience.

In Acts 19, Paul is in Ephesus and there is a debate about the baptism of John and the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. The debate was in the synagogue of Ephesus. The disciples of John were Jews and worshipped in the synagogue; they did not know about the baptism in the Spirit and, while they were sincere, they were not Christians.

Paul preached for three months and these Jews at Ephesus came into the benefit of being saved via the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. As W E Vine points out the tongues were a supernatural gift of speaking in another language without it having been learnt.

While tongues were primarily to edify the church and not for personal acclaim, tongues were a sign, not to believers but to unbelievers as on the Day of Pentecost.

There is no evidence of the continuance of this gift after Apostolic times nor indeed in the later times of the apostles themselves and this is born out by 1 Corinthians 13 8 which states that this gift would cease in the churches as would prophecies and knowledge received by immediate supernatural power. The completion of the Scriptures has provided the churches with all that is necessary for individual and collective guidance, instruction and edification.

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