**The Book of Acts Sermon III Merced**

**The Holy Spirit Sounds the Starting Gun**

Themes of Acts:

I. The work of the Holy Spirit in establishing the Church.

II. The growth and development of the Church.

Acts 1:8 A scary vision. Yet, that is what they did.

Acts is a record of a movement which, in the end, completely, absolutely, totally, forever, changed the world.

Logically, it makes absolutely no sense that a Jewish movement, led mostly by poor, uneducated people, from a relatively insignificant province in the Roman empire, with a world view diametrically opposed to that of the Roman/Greek world, following a leader who was executed at a young age—one who never wrote anything and who never left a 100 mile radius of his place of birth, who did not even speak Greek or Latin could conquer the entire Greco/Roman world.

How could they do it?

1. Early on it was the incomparable zeal and personal conviction of those who had personally known Jesus of Nazareth and those directly influenced by these witnesses. This was a Jesus movement.

2. Add to this the powerful truth-claims related to fulfilled prophecies, miracles and the resurrection.

3. Because of the obvious and inescapable moral/ethical superiority of the adherents to this growing Christian movement.

4. Because Christianity answered the questions that thinking people ask far better than any other world view out there.

5. Because the Church gave meaning, purpose and dignity for both poor, the disenfranchised, the outcast, the women—something Greek and Roman society as well as Greek philosophers did not do.

6. Because it is the truth and God was behind this movement.

So, here is what happened:

Acts Ch 3-7 They reach Jerusalem stage #1. Acts 5:28 The Sanhedrin: You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.

Stage 2: Judea and Samaria

Acts 8:2 A persecution breaks out and God scatters the church.

Acts 8:4-5 Now they go to Judea and Samaria.

Philip preaches in Samaria.

Now the unclean half-Jewish Samaritans hear the word of God.

The Jews (including the apostles and the disciples) hated the Samaritans and did not think them worthy of the kingdom.

Acts 8:26-29

v. 26 An angel tells Philip to go.

v. 29 The Holy Spirit told him to go.

The Ethiopian eunuch is probably a Jewish convert

Worse than that, he was a eunuch—which means he was unclean.

Acts 10 Now Gentiles will come into the church.

Acts 10:9-16 Peter has three visions. v. 13 GOD says “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat. Peter says to the God of the universe. “Surely not!!!”

Acts 10:19 The Holy Spirit tells Paul to go with Cornelius’ men.

Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking. The Holy Spirit interrupted his sermon in the middle!!!

Finally Acts 10:47-48 OK. I guess we better baptize Gentiles.

Acts 28:1,4 The barbarians. These are not Jews. They are not half-Jewish Samaritans. They are not unclean Jewish converts. They are not civilized Greco-Roman converts. They are barbarians.

Back to Acts 1:8 Jesus says “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 2 The Church begins. The Holy Spirit Sounds the Starting Gun.

Some have described Acts 2 as the hub (ie hub of a wheel) of the Bible.

It is the essential turning point. It is the initiation of God’s final plan. Everything God had planned from the beginning is now in place.

The final act of God to bring about his plan is completed. The “last days” have now begun (Acts 2:17). This is the starting gun for the church and a new chapter in the history of the kingdom of God.

The Day of Pentecost. This is one of the three great feast-days when Jews would come from all over the world to worship. (also Passover and Day of Atonement)

Acts 2:1-14

This is why there was a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It was a great fanfare for the greatest event in history—the offering of salvation to mankind. All of salvation history pointed to this momentous event.

Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Cappadocians, Pontus, Asians, Phrygians, Egyptians, Libyans and more

God had told Abraham “All nations will be blessed through you.”

All nations!!!! (Isaiah 2:2 “all nations will stream to it.”)

Acts 2:14-21

Notice, as predicted by Jesus in Matthew 16:19, Peter is given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Peter unlocks the door.

Peter: No, we are not drunk. This is the fulfillment of God’s prophecies about his kingdom.

Spoken of by Joel (quoting 2:28-32)

I told you that this great “Day of the Lord” will come with

v. 18 an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Well, it is here! The “last days” have begun.

v. 21 The plan of salvation of our God is now complete.

Acts 2:22-35 The first gospel sermon.

Peter’s Outline: (which is the outline of most sermons in Acts)

1. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

2. v. 22 Jesus did unprecedented signs, wonders and miracles.

“As you yourselves know.”

3. v. 23 You killed him, but this was God’s plan.

4. v. 24 But God raised him from the dead!

5. Repent and be baptized into Christ.

(This is the Jesus Bible Study Series we use)

v. 25-35 Peter quotes OT prophecies predicting resurrection of Messiah.

Acts 2:36-41

v. 36 Do you understand that you crucified Christ?

You spit on him, mocked him, scourged him, beat him, and you pounded nails into his wrists and ankles.

You did this to God’s Son!

v. 36 But God was behind this whole plan.

What will you do about this?

v. 36 Who did we crucify? The Lord. The Messiah—Savior/Anointed One.

Q: Is Jesus your Savior? (very popular)

Is he you Lord? (not so popular)

If he is not Lord, he definitely is not Savior.

v. 37 Here is what you should do: You should say to God, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Is this you? Have you surrendered to God. Have you given your life to him?

So, if you understand that you are responsible for the death of Jesus—that he died because of YOUR sin.

If you recognize that the only means of salvation is in Christ.

If you are willing, right here and now, to make him the Lord of your life.

Then what should you do?

Pray Jesus into your heart?

Say the Sinner’s prayer?

Ask for forgiveness?

Ask Jesus into your heart? NO!!!!!

v. 38 Two things:

Repent metanoeo Change of mind/change of understanding.

Be baptized baptizo Gr. be immersed.

Then God does two things:

Forgiven of sins

Receive the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:14 “who is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance until the [final] redemption of those who are God’s possession.)

That is it! It is simple and not hard to figure out.

v. 39 Q: Who does this apply to?

A: For all people for all time.

v. 40 Don’t wait. Put this corrupt generation behind you. Repent and be baptized. Save yourself.

Luke sees salvation not as a thing for the future, but something that is real right now. We are not just saved from hell. We are saved from living a corrupt and meaningless life NOW.

v. 41 Three thousand were “added to their number.” To whose number? To the church.

The Holy Spirit has sounded the starting gun for people to enter the kingdom of God.

Have you joined that race? Let us call others to join us in the kingdom of God.

Recognize Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God

Realize that, because of our rebellion and sin, we crucified Christ.

Be cut to the heart

Repent and be baptized

You can join the Holy Spirit’s army today.