



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Class Notes

The Power of Pentecost Snapshot of an Ideal Church

Acts 2.41–47

David Anguish

Review/Introduction

1. Acts 2.14–40.
 - a. The Pentecost events fulfill the “last days” prophecy of Joel, pointing to Jesus who was: attested by God, handed over to be killed, raised by God, and exalted to God’s right hand (vv. 14–35).
 - b. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah” (v. 36) (unless noted, Scripture translations are from the CSB).
 - c. Response: convicted (v. 37), commitment (v. 38a), and consequences/blessings—forgiveness, the Holy Spirit as a gift, participation in God’s promise, and deliverance from the corrupt world (vv. 38b–40).

The Remnant Identified (v. 41).

2. Publicly acting on their conviction and commitment, 3,000 acted to accept the blessings. Notice the phrase, “So then, those” (οἱ μὲν οὖν, *hoi men oun*).
3. Recall Bruce’s (1988, 72) point re: v. 40: “The deliverance of which Joel had spoken was to be enjoyed by a remnant of the whole people; so now Peter urged his hearers to make sure, by a repentant calling on the Lord, that they belonged to this remnant and saved themselves from that perverse generation.”
4. The 3,000 (v. 41) are the beginnings of that remnant.
 - a. Observation # 1: Luke connects “those who accepted his message” with those who “were baptized”; they were the ones who “were added to them.”¹
 - b. Observation # 2: The number 3,000 should be understood in light of three things.
 - 1) God had been working toward this moment from at least the time of Abraham, roughly 2,000 years before (but cf. Eph 3.11). This was not an instant success; the soil had been prepared and cultivated.
 - 2) Scholars estimate the population of Jerusalem at this time in a range from 20,000 to 100,000; more put the number somewhere in the range of 50,000 to 75,000.

¹ Regarding the possibility of administering so many baptisms in a day, Arnold (2002, 236) writes, “There were many places in Jerusalem where these new believers could have been baptized. A number of ritual baths were located within the walls of the temple as well as a number of installations west of the temple mount. There were also six large pools in Jerusalem (mentioned by Josephus): the pool of the Towers, the Strouthion Pool, the Sheep’s Pool (Bethesda), the Serpents’ Pool, Solomon’s Pool (the pool of Solomon), and the Pool of Israel.”

- 3) For the major feasts, the population increased to as many as ten times what it was normally. Using the 75,000 number as a beginning place, 3,000 is 4%; a remnant of the total.²

The Disciples' Devotion (v. 42)

5. Arnold (2002, 237) identifies the four key features characterizing the lives of the first Christians:³
 - a. Instruction: The Apostles' Teaching.
 - b. Fellowship.
 - c. Worship: The Breaking of Bread.
 - d. Prayer.
6. Notice Luke's emphasis on the nature of their devotion.
 - a. Used in vv. 42, 46 is the word προσκαρτερέω (*proskartereō*) – “attend to with continuing resoluteness, of carrying out religious obligation, *persist in, tend to* Ac 1:14; 2:42, 46; 6:4; Ro 12:12; Col 4:2” (Danker 2009, 304).
 - b. But the definition only begins to show the emphasis in v. 42; the present participle form of “devoted” is paired with the imperfect pronoun, ἦσαν (*ēsan*), translated better in the NASB: “They were [i.e., kept on being] continually devoting ...”
7. The order of the things to which they were devoted is significant, as are the things mentioned.⁴
 - a. “The apostles’ teaching” is first (cf. 1 Cor 12.28; 14.37; Eph 2.20; 3.5), “authoritative because it was delivered as ‘the teaching of the Lord through the twelve apostles’ (as the *Didachē* puts it)” (Bruce 1990, 131).
 - b. “The community, the apostolic fellowship [κοινωνία, *koinōnia*], was constituted on the basis of the apostolic teaching” (Bruce 1988, 73).
 - c. “The ‘breaking of bread’ probably denotes more than the regular taking of food together: the regular observance of what came to be called the Lord’s Supper seems to be in view” (Bruce 1988, 73).
 - d. “As for the prayers in which they participated, the primary reference is no doubt to their own appointed seasons for united prayer, although we know the apostles attended prayer services in the temple (3:1)” (Bruce 1988, 73).⁵

Church Life Described (vv. 43–47)

8. *A climate of receptivity* (Arnold 2002, 238): the apostles led in showcasing the believers in a way that left a favorable impression on those who were not part of the community (vv. 43, 47).
 - a. Their actions “filled the people with a lasting sense of awe” (φόβος, *phobos*), showing that “the conviction of sin that followed Peter’s preaching was no momentary panic” (Bruce 1988, 73).

² A third observation is that we can emphasize the amazing nature of the number 3,000 without leaving the impression that the efforts of the modern body working together to influence others to follow Jesus shows a lack of faith or commitment since we don’t see similar numerical results. Again, the soil was prepared, and the number must be understood in light of the likely number in Jerusalem that momentous day.

³ Regarding v. 42, Barrett (1994, 162) comments, “It is not agreed whether in this verse Luke is describing the meetings of the Jerusalem Christians or their way of life in general. This seems to be an unreal alternative. In an ideal community (and Luke is undoubtedly setting forth the primitive church in ideal terms) the church meeting constitutes a particular focus of the whole of the community’s life, so that each consists of the same elements, though they will be expressed in different ways and perhaps in different proportions.”

⁴ Grammatically, the items are set off in two pairs; literally: “... the teaching of the apostles and the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

⁵ Commenting about the apparently group/public nature of the objects of their devotion, Keener (2014, 325) comments, “Early Christian fellowship undoubtedly centered more on intimate worship, sharing and learning the Scriptures and the apostolic message than its modern Western counterpart often does.”

- b. The delegated authority received from Jesus allowed them to be the ones through whom “wonders and signs” (τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα, *terata kai sēmeia*) continued.
9. *Togetherness* (v. 44). Adding to their winsomeness was their unity (cf. John 17.20–23); notice the word “common” (κοινός, *koinos*).
10. *Enacted devotion* (vv. 45–47).
- a. “They sold their possessions [κτῆμα, *ktēma*] and property [ὑπαρξις, *huparxis*] and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need” (v. 45).⁶
 - b. As 4:32–5.11 demonstrates, this was not a mandated pooling of possessions, but the actions of a united community in which the ones with abundant property “began to sell their assets and share out the proceeds among the members of their community, according to individual need” (Bruce 1988, 74).⁷
 - c. Verse 46 reiterates their level of devotion (again with the participle προσκαρτεροῦντες, *proskarterountes*; v. 42) and unity: they met together and ate together “with joyful and sincere hearts.”
 - d. Verse 47 emphatically punctuates the scene.
 - 1) They were “praising God” (αἰνοῦντες τὸν θεὸν, *ainountes ton theon*), using a word that means to “give recognition for extraordinary performance”, *praise/extol* (Danker 2009, 10) and appears only seven other times in the NT, six of which are in Luke-Acts (Luke 2.13, 20; 19.37; Acts 3.8–9; cf. Rom 15.11, citing Ps 117.1; Rev 19.5).
 - 2) They were “enjoying the favor [χάριν, *charin*] of all the people,” reiterating the idea in v. 43, and showing one by-product of their actions in vv. 44–46.
 - 3) That favor was evident in the fact that others were regularly being influenced to follow Jesus and being added to the number as they “were being saved” (the passive present participle, σωζομένων, *sōzomenous*).

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Works Cited

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⁶ Harris (2019, v. 45 tn 100) comments: “It is possible that the first term for property (κτῆματα, *ktēmata*) refers to real estate (as later usage seems to indicate) while the second term (ὑπαρξεις, *huparxeis*) refers to possessions in general, but it may also be that the two terms are used together for emphasis, simply indicating that all kinds of possessions were being sold. However, if the first term is more specifically a reference to real estate, it foreshadows the incident with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11.”

⁷ Bruce (1988, 74) adds, “This pooling of property could be maintained voluntarily only when their sense of spiritual unity was exceptionally active. As soon as the flame began to burn a little lower, the attempt to maintain the communal life was beset with serious difficulties.”