

International Conversation Cafe

New Testament: The Beginning of the Church, Acts 2

Have you ever looked at an older person and wondered what they looked like when they were a teenager? What color was their hair, did they always wear glasses, what sports did they play? In what ways did they change?

Looking at the church may provoke similar questions. How did there get to be so many kinds of churches? How is it that the church is found all around the world? What kinds of things did the church do? Perhaps a look at the beginning of the church will bring greater understanding.

Acts 2 The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

The day of Pentecost came. The believers all gathered in one place. Suddenly a sound came from heaven. It was like a strong wind blowing. It filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw something that looked like tongues of fire. The flames separated and settled on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in languages they had not known before. The Spirit gave them the ability to do this.

Some people in the crowd made fun of the believers. "They've had too much wine!" they said.

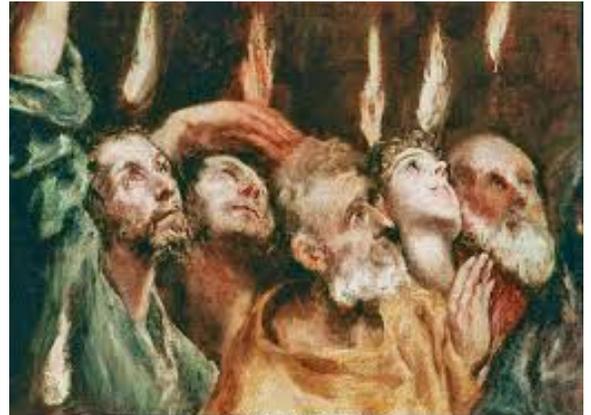
Then Peter stood up with the Eleven. In a loud voice he spoke to the crowd. "My Jewish friends," he said, "let me explain this to you. All of you who live in Jerusalem, listen carefully to what I say. You think these people are drunk. But they aren't. It's only nine o'clock in the morning! No, here is what the prophet Joel meant. He said, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Holy Spirit on all people."

Men of Israel, listen to this! Jesus of Nazareth was a man who had God's approval. God did miracles, wonders and signs among you through Jesus. You yourselves know this. Long ago God planned that Jesus would be handed over to you. With the help of evil people, you put Jesus to death. You nailed him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead. He set him free from the suffering of death. It wasn't possible for death to keep its hold on Jesus.

Those who accepted his message were baptized. About 3,000 people joined the believers that day.

Discussion

1. *What are some new words?*
2. *Retell the story in your own words.*
3. *What seems confusing?*
4. *What is this passage saying about God?*
5. *What does it say about people?*



El Greco. The Pentecost. 1596-1600. Oil on canvas, 275 x 127 cm. Museo de Prado, Madrid

The early church set a pattern for life in community. The following passage from Acts 2 describes how they worshipped and grew in faith.

The believers studied what the apostles taught. They shared life together. They broke bread and ate together. And they prayed. Everyone felt that God was near. The apostles did many wonders and miraculous signs. All the believers were together. They shared everything they had. They sold what they owned. They gave each other everything they needed. Every day they met together in the temple courtyard. In their homes they broke bread and ate together. Their hearts were glad and honest and true. They praised God. They were respected by all the people. Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

*There are at least five things followers of Jesus did together. What are they?
How did these activities affect the believer's relationship with each other and with God?
In your opinion, what makes for true community?
How do you think the church could improve today?*

Final Thoughts

The book of Acts contains one story after another about people telling others about Jesus. Often, the disciples heal the sick and speak in other languages through the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples also suffered persecution. Still, thousands of people trusted in Jesus to forgive them. They gathered together for prayer, worship, and sharing meals. The church spread to the Mediterranean region as Christians traveled and spread the good news about life in Jesus Christ. Throughout the centuries the church spread across the world.