



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 2:1-13

“The Age of the Church, part I - Its Inception”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins abruptly]

[Prayer] You made it possible for us to be reconciled to Thee and redeemed and justified and we pray that these wonderful truths may grip our hearts and that we may be responsive in gratitude for that which Christ has done. May Thy blessing rest upon the study tonight to the end that the Lord Jesus be magnified here. For we ask it in His name. Amen.

[Message] Now, tonight we come to a rather important subject in our study of God's plan for the ages because we're going to study tonight "The Age of the Church" and stress the beginning or inception of the church. And thus, we'll be studying the day of Pentecost.

Now if you are looking at this outline here or the one here, we've studied our Lord's work on the cross, his death, burial and resurrection. And then we studied in three lessons the things that he did upon the cross, that is, the work of propitiation, the work of redemption and the work of reconciliation. So we have finished with the cross and now we are going to turn to the age of the church.

Now, one reason why it is so important that we understand the age of the church is because reading the Bible is bound up so much in this. In fact, I don't really think that we can understand the Bible if we do not understand some of these great things now that have transpired.

Remember, we have spent time studying the age of the law. Israel was placed under the law, which was designed to instruct them, teach them, educate them. And that age came to an end when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross.

Now, beginning on the day of Pentecost, a new age begins. Now, this means that much of the Bible, Exodus 19:8 through Matthew 27:56, or the time of the cross, and this includes, of course, those portions of the gospels that relate to the time before the cross, much of the Bible is written with the law in mind. And therefore, we cannot understand the Bible if we do not recognize that.

Likewise, a large part of the New Testament, from Acts 2:1 through Revelation is written with the existence of the church in mind. So, if we are to read the Bible with understanding, we must understand that the Old Testament, for the most part, was written concerning a nation which was under law, a law that is now done away with. Much of the New Testament, almost all of it, is written to a group of people who formed the church of Jesus Christ. And so the truths that are applicable to the church are not necessarily applicable to Israel. And the truths that are applicable to Israel are not necessarily to be directly understood of the church.

Now just to give you an illustration. The other day some of you may have noticed on the second page of *The Dallas Morning News*, in the little section which epitomizes the news and gives some of the more personal elements in the news, you probably saw a little notice like this: Mr. So-and-so had just been married and he had been called up for jury duty. And when he was up before the judge and was to be taken in, I suppose, in the panel, he asked for the privilege of saying a word to the judge who was in charge. And he turned to the Old Testament and read Deuteronomy chapter 24 and verse 5,

which reads like this, "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken." [Laughter]

Now, this is the interesting thing about that, that judge said that he wanted to take that home and study it overnight. And so he did. He went home; he studied that passage. The next day he came back and he excused the young man from jury duty. Now you see, he was not a dispensationalist. He did not understand that that message had to do with the age of the law and is no longer applicable today. [Laughter] If he had been a wise judge, that's what he would have said. He would have said, But that's written for Israel under law and you're not an Israelite and you're not under law. You've got to serve on the jury. [Laughter] But we admire the courage and ingenuity of the young man, at any rate, and perhaps he did earn that respite from jury duty. But it certainly was not Bible, true Bible, interpretation.

Now we're going to come to the age of the church. So let's take our Bibles and turn to Acts chapter 2, for this is the great passage that describes the birth of the church. And I'm going to do something just a little bit different from that in the notes. I've given you in the notes the evidences that the church began on the day of Pentecost. But in the course of doing it, I'm going to turn to Acts chapter 2 and give you a simple exposition of this chapter. And I think we'll accomplish the same purpose: to show you that the church began on the day of Pentecost. So, Acts chapter 2 now, page eleven-forty-nine.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Now, remember when the Lord Jesus was raised up from the dead for 40 days he was with the disciples from time to time teaching them the things concerning the kingdom of God. And among those things that he told them was "Tarry ye at Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high." And so now they have been waiting. Forty days he appeared to them, and then after his ascension ten more days. The day of

Pentecost was fifty days from the day of the resurrection. So they were all together with one accord in one place.

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine."

Now, the presence of Spirit-filled men in the early church should be no cause for surprise. This is the great need of the church today: for men who are filled with the Holy Spirit. The life of the Church we know is impotent and weak. And it is very difficult to look around and find a local church which does exhibit the life that the early church did.

I once read a story of a preacher who had preached for some time. And one day just before he was getting ready to get up and give his message, he suddenly felt that that was not the message for him to give. He had preached for some time. And so when the Holy Spirit seemed to impress upon him the feeling that he should not give this well-

prepared message, he immediately turned to the Bible. And it so happened that he was led to read John chapter 14, and he began to read it.

And he came to the 7th verse of that chapter and he read, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." And it seemed as if his mind was directed to that phrase, "And ye know him" referring to the Father. And he thought I do know the Father. And he read on.

And in the 9th verse he read, "Jesus saith unto him, (that is Philip) Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" And again it seemed that God was pointing him to that expression "known me," this time referring to the Father. And he thought, Yes I do know the Lord. I do know the Father, and I do know the Son.

Well, he continued on reading until he came to the 17th verse and then he knew why God had not allowed him to give that well-prepared message, for he read here, "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And it seemed as if God directed to his heart this very phrase, "And ye know him" this time, not the Father or the Son, but the Holy Spirit.

And he asked himself, Do I really know the Holy Spirit? I know the Father, and I know the Son, and I have rejoiced in that which the Father and the Son have done for me, but I must confess I do not know the Holy Spirit. And as a result of that, the Lord gave him a real message as he came in to some experience of the knowledge of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the blessed Trinity.

Now, the New Testament Church was a church which was filled with the Holy Spirit, and they knew what it was to be filled with the Spirit. This is not unusual Christian life. This is normal Christian life to be filled with the Spirit. But if you talk to the average church member today, even in our good churches, about the filling of the Holy Spirit, and it is very much an unknown tongue to them.

I have a theology teacher who was a very good music man. He had a music degree, and therefore, he was very well acquainted with the hymnology of the church. But it so happened that the hymn that we used constantly was a hymn in which about eighty percent of the hymns began with "Come Holy Spirit." And Dr. Chafer used to like to point this out to us. He would say to us, Men, notice that about eighty percent of the hymns in our hymnbook which we use, which is a good hymnbook, begin with the words "Come Holy Spirit," for it seems as if the hymn writers have not come to realize the fact that the Holy Spirit did come on the day of Pentecost. And it is not our part today to pray "Oh, come Holy Spirit," for he has come.

Now one of the reasons for the ignorance of the Holy Spirit in the church today is rationalism. There are those who say, Well this talk about the Holy Spirit, that is, we do not understand that and this cannot be of God. The Holy Spirit is just a power or just an influence. And so many do not know him for that reason.

On the other hand, we have those who go too far. And so we have the emotionalism of those who roll in the dust. Now, we used to call them holy rollers back in our part of the United States. They have carried the doctrine of the Holy Ghost to the extreme.

Satan always follows one or two methods. He either hides the truth so that we do not see it, do not get a chance to hear it. And this method he often employs in our churches. We go in our churches and we listen Sunday after Sunday and we never hear anything because Satan has been hiding the truth from us.

I have a good friend who has attended a certain church for years and years. Finally about two weeks ago, he went and he came out, and he said to his wife, I've been listening to this man all of these years and I've been waiting all of this time for him to say something and he is not said anything yet. This morning was the last straw. I'm never going to listen to him again. And mind you, that man was not even a Christian. So you

see, it's possible for Satan to hide the truth from us by not allowing us to hear it. I know for many years I did not hear the truth.

On the other hand, another method of Satan is to over emphasize it. And so we have emotionalism and the excesses that go along with much that we call today the Pentecostal movement, although not all Pentecostals are as extreme as others. But these two methods Satan employs with regard to the Holy Spirit. Hide the truth or over emphasize it.

Well, now let's come to this Acts chapter 2 and let's see what took place on the Day of Pentecost. Beginning with the 1st verse now, Luke tells us the date. It is the Day of Pentecost. Now Pentecost comes from a word which means fifty. So the reference is to fifty days following the resurrection. In the Old Testament Israel was given seven feasts. There was the feast of the Passover. There was the feast of unleavened bread. There was the feast of firstfruits; that was to commemorate resurrection typically. And then there was the feast of Pentecost, which occurred fifty days later.

On this feast day, two loaves were made and they were made with leaven. And they were offered to the Lord. Now these two loaves made with leaven typically suggest Jews and Gentiles who form one offering to the Lord.

Now this is really what happened on the day of Pentecost, but this is the typical background of it. It was fifty days after the resurrection and they were all gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was some physical phenomenon. We read, "There came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."

So the first thing we notice is this violent blast of wind. Undoubtedly this was designed to represent the power of the Holy Spirit. Now remember, the title for the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Now, do you remember what the word spirit means? The word spirit means wind, the holy wind. The word pneuma in Greek means wind or breath or

spirit. In the Old Testament the word ruwach which means spirit also means wind. So actually the title for the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is the Holy Wind.

Now the fact that there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind is God's desire to make the physical phenomena suggest the spiritual reality. So when the Holy Spirit comes from heaven, he comes as a rushing mighty wind because he is the Holy Wind. But that is not all, for this title, remember. By the way, the Holy Spirit does not have a name. He does not have a name such as Jesus. He is the unnamed member of the Trinity. He is given the title Holy Spirit, but we don't know his name.

Now the second thing that happens is in verse 3, "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." Now apparently, the fire came and then the fire divided so that there was over each one of those that were gathered a tongue of fire.

Now in other words then, there was the mighty blast of wind and there was the visible phenomena of the fire. Now remember the spirit's title is Holy Spirit, not only wind but Holy Wind. And since fire suggests purification, again in this physical phenomenon, the spiritual reality is designedly portrayed. So the coming of the wind and the tongues of fire are designed to show them that it is the Holy Wind or the cleansing, purifying wind of God who has come.

The fourth verse says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." So these physical phenomena were wind and fire suggesting his name. The spiritual phenomenon is that they were filled with the Holy Ghost and they begin to speak with other tongues.

Now, I will say something about that in just a moment, other tongues. But one thing you can say right now, these men, whatever this thing meant, these men were never the same. The apostles after Pentecost never thought of the past. They always thought of the present or the future. In other words, they came to realize the presence of the Lord as a daily reality. And that is what, if anything else is meant, that one thing is meant by

Pentecost. The Lord Jesus has come again to them in the person of the Holy Spirit so that they can know assuredly that as they live and walk and witness, they live and walk and witness with him. His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" is realized at the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes and consummates that union with the Lord Jesus. Well, we'll talk about that in a moment too.

But I want you now to notice several consequences of the Spirit's coming very briefly. There are really three of them I think. First of all they were amazed. Notice verse 7, "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?" And then in the 12th verse, "And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" So one thing that the spirit produces was amazement.

The second thing the Spirit produced was perplexity. Verse 12, "And they were all amazed, and were in doubt." Now, if you have a Bible with a marginal note, you notice that that word in the Greek text means perplexed. They were disturbed by this and you would have been too, because you see, here were men who looked just like the rest of them, who were just ordinary men and suddenly they heard these men speaking in all of the tongues on those who were gathered in that place. And this surely would have been something that would have caused amazement. If you were a group of foreigners, and I suddenly were to start speaking so that if you were an Arabian you were to hear your tongue. And if you were something else I might suddenly break into that language, sooner or later you would be very amazed too. So, you can imagine the amazement and also the perplexity that came to them.

And finally, verse 13, they began to criticize. "Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine." And you know that is always the response when men who are not believers come in among those who are Spirit-filled. They are amazed. They are perplexed. And they criticize. Always it is true.

Now let's just stop for a moment and think about Pentecost and some of the things that this event means. Now the first thing that it means I think is the inauguration of a new dispensation. The Spirit is now given.

I want you to turn back to John chapter 7 to see this. John chapter 7. Now in verse 37 of John chapter 7, remember, the Lord Jesus now is in his earthly ministry and in Jerusalem at the great day of the feast of tabernacles. John 7 verse 37, we read this,

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit," (Now notice these words) "which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

Now what does he mean? Why he means that the Holy Spirit is to come, but the Holy Spirit will not come until he has been glorified at the right hand of the Father. Then when he is glorified, the Spirit shall come and those who have believed in him shall receive the Holy Spirit. So, the first thing that Pentecost means is that a new age has been inaugurated: the age of the Holy Spirit.

It is very interesting if you look at this diagram. This Old Testament age is preeminently the age of the Father. You will find not so many references to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. And of course, you do not find any references to the Son of God, one or two prophetic references and then you have some references by reason of the fact that he did appear as the Angel of Jehovah occasionally, and you have many things that fore-view, give us a fore-view of him. But he does not appear because he is to be born in Bethlehem in the manger. He is to make his appearance in what we call New Testament times. So this age is, well, all of these ages are the ages of the Father.

But then when the Lord, I should now, of course, include the gospel period here. But when the Lord Jesus is born, and he lived under law, remember; when he is born until the time of the cross and the resurrection, that is preeminently the age of the Son.

But when Pentecost takes place and the Holy Spirit comes, we enter into the age of the Holy Spirit. And I think it's very interesting too that it should be that way, because we have Father, Son and Spirit and we are living in the age of the Holy Spirit. So Pentecost means the inauguration of a new age. In Jerusalem, fifty days after the coming after the resurrection, in accordance with Old Testament prophecy, the Holy Spirit came.

Many years ago H. A. Ironside who was a great Bible teacher of the last generation was talking with a man who had been attending a tarrying meeting. Now "tarrying meetings" (put that in quote) are meetings where believers get together to tarry, to wait for the Holy Spirit. They are generally associated with Pentecostals.

Well this man was talking to H. A. Ironside and he said, Dr. Ironside, we've just been in a great tarrying meeting in San Jose, California. And Dr. Ironside said, Well, what do you mean by tarrying meetings? He said, Well, we were waiting for the Holy Spirit to come upon us. And Dr. Ironside said, Well, what scriptural authority do you have for that? He said, Oh, the Bible very plainly says, Tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high. And Dr. Ironside said, Aren't you confounding times and places. He said, you're over ten thousand miles from Jerusalem and you're nineteen hundred years too late. It's no wonder that the Holy Spirit did not come. [Laughter]

Now you see the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost in response to Old Testament prophecy. It was prophesied that he should come. And here in a moment we'll quote the prophecy from Joel saying that this is that which Joel spoke of: the coming of the Holy Spirit. So we have now entered a new age, the age of the Holy Spirit and the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost inaugurates that new age.

The second thing that Pentecost means is that this is the birthday of the church of Jesus Christ. Now here, I've got some material in the notes and I want to go briefly

through this. And this is what I would like for you to do in your homework. After we go through this, I want you to go home, sometime during this week read again the proof that I have there from Scripture that the church began on the day of Pentecost because it is exceedingly important in Bible interpretation. But we're going to go through it now and I want to show you how we can know that Pentecost is the birthday of the church. And we do not have a church until Pentecost.

So let's turn to the first passage, Ephesians chapter 1 verses 22 and 23 because we want to see what the church is first. Ephesians 1:22 and 23. That's Galatian, Ephesians, page twelve-fifty-one.

Now Paul writes here some words that define for us the church. What is the church? What have you thought of the church as being? Next week, the Lord willing, we're going to talk about the nature of the church, but let me anticipate myself by asking you this question. What have you thought of the church? Did you think when we say church, do you think of the Episcopal church or the Presbyterians church or the Baptist Church or the church of Christ? Is that what you think of when the word church comes to mind?

Well let's notice what Paul says about the church. It's always good to know what God says about something, you know. I find that very exhilarating to see what God has to say about it. Sometimes I have to change my viewpoints too. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Now Paul says here that the church is the body of Christ, "Which is his body." "Hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body." Now, the church is the body of Christ. That's the first thing we want to learn. The church is the body of Christ.

Now, obviously it's not the physical body of Christ. The physical body of Christ was placed in the grave. It was raised the third day. And now a spiritual body is at the

right hand of the Father. So, the body of Christ must be a broad term. But it is spiritual. So, the church is the body of Christ. That's the first thing.

Now, let's turn to the second passage, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 12 and 13. 1 Corinthians 12:12 and 13, page twelve-twenty-three. Paul says here, "For as the body is one, and have many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." In other words, Christ is like a body which has many members. It has a head. He is the head. It has many members.

My body has five fingers, five fingers, ten fingers, ten toes, two arms, two eyes, two ears, many members, but one body. So also is Christ, Paul says. In other words, there is a unity and there is a plurality in the body of Christ.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Now notice, this is not water baptism. This is baptism by the Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." So Paul has said the church is the body of Christ and he has said that the way that one comes into the church is by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit have we been baptized into one body."

Now, this is a remarkable thing. I thought that you joined the church by putting your name on a roll, membership roll. Isn't that the way you join the church? Now, a lot of people think that. A lot of people think that you don't join the church until you are on the roll of some church. Have you ever searched the New Testament truth for that?

I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll just offer you a hundred dollars if by next Monday night, you read through the New Testament and you discover that anyone was on the roll of a local church. Now would you mind doing that? Don't you need a hundred dollars? Aren't you earnest, sincere? Wouldn't you like to study the Bible. Isn't that a good incentive? You couldn't have a better incentive than that. Except you'll never get my hundred dollars. I'm not offering you a thing, because I know it's not there.

You see, you don't join the church by your name on a membership roll. You join the church by being baptized by the Holy Spirit. Now that's an important doctrine. So, Paul has said the church is the body of Christ, and the way we get into the church is by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

"As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Well, the church is the body of Christ, and the way you get into the church is by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Now, I could stop right at this point and point out to you that the way that you are baptized by the Holy Spirit, the method whereby this takes place. It obviously is something we do not do, because it is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But the way or the method whereby this takes place is faith in Jesus Christ, for Paul says of the Corinthians "For we have been all baptized into one body." And he refers to them as "Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ."

So it is by faith in Christ that this baptism of the Spirit takes place, which puts us into the body of Christ. So the operation of the Holy Spirit which places us into the true church, the spiritual body of Christ, the invisible church, the church which all believers belong to, the work of God which puts us into that body is the baptism of the Holy Spirit which takes place when we believe in Christ. It's something we don't feel. It's something that takes place instantaneously. In the mind of God and in the heart of a believer we are joined to Christ the moment we believe, and we become a member of church which is the body of Christ.

Well now, you can see if that be true, if the church is composed of a group of people who have believed in Christ and been baptized into this one body, then whenever that baptism took place for the first time, that is the time when the church began, obviously, because the church is a group of people who have been baptized by the Spirit into the one body.

Now let's turn back to Matthew chapter 16 and verse 18. We've learned that the church is the body of Christ and the way you enter it is by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now Matthew chapter 16, in verse 18, page ten-twenty-one.

Now, this is a very famous passage, of course. This is the confession that Peter made at Caesarea Philippi. Let's read beginning with verse 13. I love this passage for several reasons. "And when Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

Now did you know that this is one of the few places in the Authorized Version in which there is grammatical error? We usually take the AV as being the standard for good English and it is. But this is one grammatical mistake. If you're a schoolteacher in the midst, you'll recognize it immediately. It should not be whom but who, for you see the who is the predicate nominative after the am. So "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" I am who? Not whom. Well that is not the spiritual lesson, of course for the section. But that's why I wanted to begin at verse 13. I want you to see that.

"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist." Isn't that interesting? Apparently there was such a likeness between the Lord and John the Baptist that some said he was John the Baptist. Others said, No, he's Elijah. Now Elijah was the great prophet of the law and performed those mighty miracles and so it was natural that they should say, This is Elijah again, for the Jews expected Elijah to come back. "And others Jeremias." And why Jeremiah? Jeremiah was the weeping prophet. Is it not perhaps because he who was called the man of sorrows gave that impression to men? He reminded them of Jeremiah because he wept over Jerusalem. He wept over others.

"Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye?" I'm not interested so much in what men are saying, but what about you?

The Lord was always like that, you know. And he's like that today. It's not so much what our neighbor thinks spiritually. It is what we think that really counts. This is the personal application: "Whom say ye that I am?"

"Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." My, what a great theologian Peter was to speak out like this. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Peter spoke, you see, because this had been revealed to him. That poor man could never have come to this wonderful confession were it not for divine revelation. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Now, I want you to notice that future tense. "I will build my church."

Now the Lord Jesus spoke that before the cross, sometime in here. And he said, "I will build my church." He did not say I am building my church. He said, "I will build my church." What does that mean? What does that say to us? Well, that says to us that the church is future from the time of our Lord's earthly ministry. That means that there is no church in the Old Testament period. The church did not begin with Adam, it did not begin with Abraham, it did not begin with David. It was not in existence. The church is something new. So it was future.

Now let's turn to Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Acts chapter 1, page eleven-forty-seven. Acts chapter 1.

Now this is in our Lord's post resurrection ministry, this forty-day period of time when he was appearing to the disciples. He appeared about ten times to them and taught them many things concerning the Kingdom of God. Now, let's read verse 4 and 5.

"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with (or in or by) the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

Now if the church is that group of people who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, it is obvious that since the baptism of the Holy Spirit has not yet occurred. And now we're talking about this period of time here, the church is not yet in existence for the Holy Spirit has not been baptizing men into the body of Christ yet. So he says, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." We are close to that time. In Acts chapter 1 verse 5, but the baptism of the Spirit has not yet occurred. So the church is future from the time of the post resurrection ministry of the Lord Jesus.

Now let's read Acts chapter 2 and verse 4 again. Now, here we have a text which, if we had been writing this and we wanted to prove that the church began on the Day of Pentecost, we would not have said what is said in the 4th verse here. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." We would have said, And they were all baptized with the Holy Ghost. But the text says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

Now there is a reason for this, because you see in Acts chapter 2, Peter is writing, not from the standpoint of what happened according to God, but what happened according to the men. He is writing from the standpoint of experience not from the standpoint of theology.

And furthermore, the word "filled" is a broad term, we will learn when we study the New Testament . In other words, every man who is filled with the Spirit has been baptized by the Spirit. But not everybody who has been baptized by the Spirit is necessarily filled with the Spirit, for the filling of the Spirit is yielded-ness to the Spirit, whereas the baptism of the Spirit is the work of the Spirit that puts us in the church. A

man may be in the church but not yielded to the Holy Spirit. He may be a carnal Christian. So if a man is filled in this age, he has been baptized.

But nevertheless, that disturbs us a little bit, because we would like to pinpoint the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, so we can say that's when that ministry began. And if that ministry began on the Day of Pentecost, that's when the church began. Well, we can do it. Let's turn over to Acts chapter 11. Acts chapter 11.

Now in Acts chapter 11, Peter is describing what happened in the house of Cornelius when the gospel first went out to the Gentiles. And he's trying to explain something that was somewhat embarrassing to him, because you see, Peter was a narrow-minded Jew for a long time. He was a wonderful Christian man. He had believed in Christ. He had been baptized by the Holy Spirit himself into the body of Christ, but those prejudices built up through the years, in fact, through the centuries which he inherited that salvation is of the Jews and that the Gentiles must be blessed through the Jews always, not independently of the Jew, it was hard for that prejudice to be broken down. But in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit had come upon Gentiles and Peter was amazed when he saw them speaking with tongues.

So now he's in Jerusalem trying to explain what happened. And I know this must have been a tense situation, because he's looking out at those Jews and in those days, you know, they were pretty serious about their Bible doctrine. And here was a man saying that something new was happening. And I know that he was trying to fight the fear that was in his heart, because he did have fear. Later on when the Jews from Jerusalem came, you remember, Peter went back and began to stop eating with Gentiles because of those men that came from Jerusalem.

Well, now in verse 15 he's saying. He's told now how he was called to Cornelius' house and how Cornelius had said that Peter would tell him words whereby he should be saved. And so in verse 15 of Acts chapter 11 we read, " And as I began to speak, the

Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." "As on us at the beginning." That, of course, is the Day of Pentecost. Us, us Jews, here in Jerusalem.

Then Peter says, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." That is Acts chapter 1 in verse 5. We read it, remember. So, Peter identifies what happened in Cornelius' house with that which happened to them in the beginning as the fulfillment of the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit made in Acts chapter 1, verse 5.

Now, do we see that? It is important that we see that. The promise of the baptism of the Spirit is made in Acts chapter 1, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

Now we would know from "not many days hence" that there is no other event but Pentecost that fulfills that designation. But it doesn't really say that in Acts 2. So we go to Acts chapter 11, and Peter there says what happened in the house of Cornelius is what happened to us in the beginning. And that was the fulfillment of the promise in Acts 1:5 about the baptism of the Spirit. So Peter says what happened in Cornelius' house is what happened to us in the beginning, that was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They were baptized by the Holy Spirit in Cornelius' house.

"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ." Now there is the second important thing I want you to see. You see, the one condition for the baptism of the Holy Spirit that puts us in the church of Christ is to believe. Believe. You notice that? "Who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now the reason this is so important is because in Cornelius' house they received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized with water. They were baptized by the Holy Spirit before they were baptized with water, because the baptism of the Holy Spirit is contingent upon believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that is important. It may not seem important to you, but it is extremely important, doctor, that we know that when we believe in Christ we are placed by the

baptism of the Holy Spirit into the church which is the body of Christ. And if we have believed in the Lord Jesus, we are in the church, in the church.

Now, you may fellowship with a local church, and you ought to, a local church of believers. But you are in the one church that counts when you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Holy Spirit puts you in to the body of Christ the moment that you believe.

"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." A salvation they do not earn, a salvation which is given to them.

Well now, there's one more passage. It is true that in Acts chapter 2 in verse 47 we read, " Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

It so happens, however, that most of the ancient Greek manuscripts do not have the word church in Acts chapter 2, verse 47. The first occurrence of the word church in the Book of Acts certainly is Acts chapter 5 and verse 11. Acts chapter 5 and verse 11. "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things."

So here then, in the early days of the believers in Jerusalem, Luke begins to talk about the group of believers as a church. Why? Because on the Day of Pentecost the baptism of the Holy Spirit has taken place , the believers have now been welded into one body by the baptism of the Holy Spirit who placed them into the one body of Jesus Christ. So that now the church is a unity. Christ is the head; we are the members. And the local church, of course, is to be a representation of this spiritual body of Christ.

Why do you think the church is called the body of Christ? Why? Well you see, the Lord Jesus came as the Son of the Father. The body of Christ during the days of his earthly ministry was a fleshly body, flesh and blood, in which God tabernacled. God spoke to men through Jesus Christ who was in this body of flesh and blood. He died, he was placed in the grave, on the third day he arose from the grave, he was given a

glorious resurrection body. But it is a physical body, glorified. He ascended to the right hand of the Father.

How shall the ministry of the preaching of the gospel go out to the ends of the earth? Well you see, there is now a body on earth again, a body of Christ on earth again. Not one mind, one person, but a whole great company of believers in the Lord Jesus who form the body of Christ so that the ministry of God may be carried to the ends of the earth. So the body of Christ, as a term, is used so that we might remember the fact that we are to represent him upon the earth, corporately and of course, also individually.

So the church then began on the Day of Pentecost. May I say one final thing, too? I had intended to say some more things but we can save them. Let me say just a word about the word church itself. The word church comes from the Greek word *kyriokos*. *Kyriokos* comes from a word *kyrios* which means the Lord. So that *kyriokos* is lordly. When we said the Lord's Day, it is the *kyriokos* day, the lordly day. From *kyrios* comes an old Anglo-Saxon word *C I R C E*, *circe*. And you can see the relationship *kyriokos*, "kirke", you can see those two Ks appearing. Now if you are a German, you know that the church is "dekirke". If you're Scott, you know that you don't say church in Scotland, you the "kirk", the "kirk". And this of course is from *circe*. So the German word, the Scottish word. German, by the way, and Scotts, they're very closely related. *Kinen* means to know and "I kin you," that means I'm acquainted with you in Scotts, you know, Scottish. So, the church, the word church is really a word that means belonging to the Lord, belonging to the Lord.

So, the church is the group of people who belong to the Lord. Now, it's not a bad term, and I'm not really objecting to the term. And I'm not saying that you ought to stop using the term church. But I just want to say this. It is not the translation of the Greek word.

The Greek word for church is the word *ekkl sia*. *Ekklesia*, I'll spell it out for you, and most people who just transliterate it and spell it, they pronounce it *ekkl sia*, *ekkl sia*.

Now *ekklisia* comes from two words, one *kale* which means to call and *ek* which means out. So the church is a group of people who have been called out, called out.

For example, I might say, We're going to select a football team, and I'm going to select the eleven best men in this group, well the eleven best players in this group, may not be men, necessarily. So I say, Chip Howard, I want you. You look like a good guard. And so I call him out. I take him out of the crowd. And then I say, Howard Prier, you look like a good end, and so on until I get eleven people here. Now they are called out from among the multitude. The church is the *ekklisia* of God, the called out ones of God.

You see, the gospel goes forth in this present age. The Holy Spirit works. The Holy Spirit speaks to one heart. The Holy Spirit speaks to another heart. The Holy Spirit to another. And there is response. There is faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit takes that person who believes in Christ, baptizes them into the body of Christ so that they are the called out ones. That's what God is doing in this present age. This age from Pentecost until the time when the Lord comes in the air is the period in which he is calling out believers to be part of the body of Christ which will meet him in the air.

Now isn't that wonderful? Isn't that wonderful? We are the called out ones of the Lord. So there is selection and separation going on throughout this present age. That's the church. And you're privileged to hear the message that Jesus Christ died for your sins. You're privileged to be the recipients of the ministry of the Holy Spirit who has brought this gospel to you and you have the privilege of believing and becoming a member of the body of Christ.

And when you're a member of that body, you belong to the Lord. You are one of the called out ones. You are one of the church. You belong to the Lord and you need have no fear, because if you belong to him, you belong to that group which will be in his presence ultimately just as sure as anything can be sure.

“The Age of the Church, part I – Its Inception” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2008 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Now next time we're going to talk about the nature of the church. But our time is up, so we must stop. Let's have a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this wonderful privilege of being in the church of Jesus Christ and we pray Lord that we may not only understand it more fully and more deeply, but be responsive to the responsibilities that we have. May the Holy Spirit guide and direct us and may we know the presence of the Lord Jesus in our lives individually during this time that Thou hast given us to be upon the earth. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.