

One of the great traditions of the modern Christianity is that Acts chapter 2 is the birthday of “the church”. This remains the great foundation of Christian faith and practice right across the denominational spectrum. So broadly held and concreted is this tradition that it is rarely questioned. Indeed, to even question the validity of this tradition is to invite criticism or even rejection as some sort of cultish independent.

The word “church” appears in the opening chapters of Acts and we, the Gentile believers of today, having been convinced that there is only “one true church” inject ourselves into the scene. This is called eisogesis, putting into the Word of God situations which don’t exist. Many Christians at least compare Israel to the Church but this is also confusion since it is an imbalanced comparison. Israel is a called out company with its own God given purpose and inheritance; Israel is a church. We believers today, including saved Jews and Gentiles, constitute another called out company or church called the Church which is His Body. Thus we should compare the two by describing them as the church Israel and the church which is His Body. Israel is just as much a “church of God” as the Body of Christ so we have two different companies, two different inheritances, two different purposes of God for each. Mixing them together is a disaster.

Acts 2 is the fulfillment of a Feast given to Israel (Lev.23) and is not about us believers today. By ignoring the differences between these two churches we turn what God has given to Israel into something we have imagined for ourselves.

Having traditionalized the Jewish Pentecost into a Gentile birthday, we then have to support this falsehood by maintaining other falsehoods. We need to glibly dismiss Israel nationally as being cast aside before they were by God. Then we must include Gentiles into Acts 2 so we can promote the false concept that Jews and Gentiles were baptized into the Body of Christ.

This lesson we shall examine the Word of God to determine whether any of these ancient traditions are scripturally sound. But first we must re-examine the background to Pentecost.

Some who follow the tradition that the church started at Pentecost recognize that the disciples are not evidently acting or speaking in harmony with tradition. To bypass this apparent contradiction they claim that the disciples were either confused regarding the Feast of Pentecost or totally unaware of the incredible new beginning God was about to unfold before their eyes. To embellish this falsehood they describe them as a sad and unfulfilled group who were finally made aware of God’s purpose when the Holy Spirit gave them the enlightenment. But is this true?

The book of Acts was written by Luke and the last chapter of his gospel and the first of Acts shed light on that time. Here are some verses from Luke 24 where our Lord had revealed himself to the two on the road to Emmaus and later the other disciples, and in both cases confirming some things to them;
Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:
Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself [Luk 24:25-27](#)

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me [Luk 24:44](#)

The resurrected Saviour spoke to the two downhearted disciples on the road and encouraged them that suffering must be endured before glory. The suffering was all foretold in the OT and the glory that was to surely follow was foretold in the OT as well. This should begin to prepare us for the fact that the glory was all OT based and includes the Feast of Pentecost and the other Feasts which follow it. The glory of the Old Testament is the glory of Messiah ruling on the throne of His father David out of Zion. In other words, the glory of the Old Testament is not the glory of the Church which is His Body; rather it is the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth.

After Israel was nationally put aside at the end of the book of Acts, Paul wrote in Ephesians about those things concerning the church which is His Body, and those things were “unsearchable” and “hidden in God”, see Eph.3:8-9.

Returning to Luke 24 we find the Lord repeating Himself after he showed His disciples His hands and feet and ate before them. He repeated that He had spoken about the suffering and glory written about in the Old Testament; the glory of God dwelling among Israel in His Holy Mountain. But before that glory, messiah had to suffer for the salvation of all people not just Israel. Then the Saviour did something marvelous for them, He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures;
[And He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures. Luk 24:45](#)

The disciples had their intellect opened to comprehend the very Scriptures our Lord had been using to describe the glory that was to come. Is it wise for anyone to suggest that the disciples had no idea what Pentecost was all about? Is it correct for anyone to suggest that the disciples were sorrowful, unfulfilled and in disarray when after He instructed them to wait for the promise of the Father which must also be related to the glory of Christ on the earth. Here are the disciples with new understanding, a promise of power and their Lord’s blessing watching Him ascend and they were filled with joy praising God in Israel’s temple, not hiding at home in sorrow and confusion:

[And it happened as He blessed them, He withdrew from them and was carried up into Heaven. And worshiping Him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen. Luk 24:51-53](#)

We repeat, the disciples were not dejected and confused, nor uncertain in any way of what was about to happen but were filled with great joy, in the Temple, praising and blessing God.

Why is this background so important? Because if tradition accuses the disciples of getting things wrong but the Word of God proves they were right, then we must reconsider the events in a different light.

The opening chapter of Acts provides further evidence that the disciples were not ignorant of the Lord’s purposes or confused. We have already seen that the Lord opened their understanding to understand the Scriptures and with this divinely given ability to comprehend the events about to fall, they were also taught by the Lord for over a month;

[Truly, O Theophilus, I made the first report as to all things that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day He was taken up, having given directions to the apostles whom He chose, through the Holy Spirit; to whom He also presented Himself living after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them through forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And having met with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father which you heard from Me. For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized in *the* Holy Spirit not many days from now. Act 1:1-5](#)

Pentecost was the 50th day from the wave offering in the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For forty of those days the Lord spoke to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God as found in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. There is nothing in the Old Testament about any group of believers being raised and seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

Notice the Lord reminds them of the baptism of the Holy Spirit which was promised by the Father. This coming of the Holy Spirit can be found in familiar passages of Old Testament which speak of Israel and its glory with the Christ. Here are some passages about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as promised in the Scriptures and we notice that the earth and the Lord’s holy mountain are in view and we must not spiritualize these to mean heaven;

[Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice. For Jehovah will do great things. Do not be afraid, beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness grow green; for the tree bears its fruit, and the fig tree and the vine yield their strength. Be glad then, sons of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah your God. For He has given you the former rain according to righteousness, and He will cause the rain to come down for you, the former rain](#)

and the latter rain in the first *month*. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years which the swarming locust has eaten, the locust larvae, and the stripping locust, and the cutting locust, My great army which I sent among you. And you shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of Jehovah your God, who has dealt with you wonderfully; and My people shall never be ashamed. And you shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel, and that I *am* Jehovah your God, and no one else; and My people shall never be ashamed. And it shall be afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams; your young men shall see visions. [Joel 2:21-28](#)

Some Christians think that when Luke says the Lord spoke to them about “the Kingdom of God” it really means “the church” but as we can see from Joel the Kingdom of God is about Zion and Jehovah, the God of Israel. Here is another passage about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the earth;

Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant, and Israel whom I have chosen; So says Jehovah who made you, and formed you from the womb, *who* will help you; Fear not, O Jacob My servant, and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground. I will pour My spirit on your seed, and My blessing on your offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I *am* Jehovah's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall write with his hand, For Jehovah, and be named by the name of Israel. So says Jehovah, the King of Israel, and His redeemer Jehovah of Hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and besides Me *there is no God*. [Isa 44:1-6](#)

Finally, here is a passage which speaks of Israel's re-gathering and restoration under their God and included in this passage is the promise of the Holy Spirit poured out on them;

Therefore so says the Lord Jehovah: And I will return the captivity of Jacob, and will have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for My holy name; *after* they have borne their shame and all their sins by which they have sinned against Me, when they dwell securely in their land and no one terrifies; when I have brought them again from the peoples, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then they shall know that I *am* Jehovah their God who exiled them among the nations. But I have gathered them to their own land, and have not left any of them there. Nor will I hide My face from them any more, for I have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah. [Eze 39:25-29](#)

Dear reader, can you see in the passages above an inseparable link between the Holy Spirit's gifts and Israel and their land? How powerfully these words of the Lord demand we stop reading the church which is His body into these passages. The Ezekiel passage is very significant in that the Lord speaks clearly that He will not hide His face from them anymore for in that day, he will have poured out His Spirit on the house of Israel. IN that day Israel will dwell in safety, they will have been re-gathered into their own land and the world will know that Jehovah is Israel's God.

With these OT passages before us, do we really struggle to understand the only question the disciples had after the Lord's teaching? With the Word of God so plainly simple and simply plain doesn't their question prove they had indeed received wonderful teaching with opened minds of understanding?

[Then, indeed, these coming together, they asked Him, saying, Lord, do You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Act 1:6](#)

Tradition links this baptism of the Holy Spirit with “the church” but the educated and illuminated disciples linked it with the restored Kingdom to Israel. Which is true?

Would we condemn the Lord's disciples as being ignorant men, confused and downcast when the Scriptures clearly show their only question proves they had listened well and knew exactly what the Lord had been speaking about? The Kingdom of God the Lord had been speaking to them about was the Kingdom of that is, from God out of heaven but on the earth. This is what the Lord meant when He said, his kingdom was not of, and that is, it did not originate from this world see John 18:36. The Lord Himself was not of this world but would rule the world out of Jerusalem.

Before we look at Peter and the gospel he preached to the Jews let us briefly examine the miracle found in Acts 3:1-11. Here a man, lame from birth, was healed by faith in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Peter had listened to the Lord and his audience listened to Peter and they knew the Old Testament Scriptures. Here is a prophetic passage about healing of the lame when the Lord comes to save Israel;

Make the weak hands strong and make the feeble knees sure. Say to those of a hasty heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, with the full dealing of God. He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness waters shall break out, and streams in the desert. [Isa 35:3-6](#)

Tradition says Pentecost was the birthday of the church, but the healing of the lame man declares the glory the Lord spoke about was the glory of Israel's God returning to the earth to save them. Jesus of Nazareth was the King of Israel and He would restore Israel to national health just as the lame man was restored to full health. Prophecy had clearly foretold the healing of the lame at Israel's restoration.

We must stand with the Word of God. The disciples were correct when they asked the Lord if He would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel. What a thrill it would be if Christianity would commend the disciples rather than condemn them. Now, let us listen to Peter as he preached to his brothers, the men of Israel;

And now, brothers, I know that you did it through ignorance, as also your rulers did. But those things which God before had shown by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He fulfilled in this manner. Therefore repent and convert so that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of [refreshing](#) shall come from the presence of the Lord. And He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was proclaimed to you, whom Heaven truly needs to receive until the times of [restoration](#) of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began. [Act 3:17-21](#)

Does this gospel proclaim the beginning of something new and previously hidden in God? Or must we acknowledge this gospel is proclaimed by an apostle with his mind opened to understand the Scriptures which had clearly foretold the restoration of the Kingdom and the empowering of the Holy Spirit upon Israel when their King came back to reign over them.

We do not restore something by bringing in something entirely new or different. Peter refers to the times of "refreshing" or revival for Israel and the times of "restoration" which the prophets spoke about and friends, the prophets spoke about the restoration of the church Israel not the restoration of the church which is His body which never previously existed. How can something which did not previously exist be restored?

We now address the tradition that Pentecost was the birthday of the church because Jews and Gentiles, supposedly, were baptized into the body of Christ when the Holy Spirit was poured out. We have already seen that this concept is foreign to the prophecies regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit at the restoration of Israel but we let Scripture prove that the tradition is groundless because there were not any Gentiles at Pentecost to be united the Jews.

Pentecost is one of the Feasts given to Israel and it therefore foreshadowed something for that nation. The Lord gave Israel commands concerning the Feasts and this one is very relevant to this examination; [Three times in a year shall all your males appear before Jehovah your God in the place which He shall choose: in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles. And they shall not appear before Jehovah empty, Deu 16:16](#)

Jerusalem was swollen with pilgrims who in obedience to the Lord's command were there for Passover and Pentecost. Luke mentions these in the second chapter and we note very carefully the pilgrims were Jews and proselytes, not Gentiles;

[And dwelling at Jerusalem there were Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying to one another, Behold, are not these who speak all Galileans? And how](#)

do we each hear in our own dialect in which we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya around Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking the great things of God in our own languages. [Act 2:5, 7-11](#)

Twice in this passage we are told that the crowd consisted of Jews (and proselytes) from twelve nations and regions who had gathered to the Feast. They are also described as being devout which they certainly were since at great expense they had obeyed the command of God to appear before Him.

Please note a proselyte was not considered a Gentile by the Israelites, having been baptized, circumcised, presented an offering and according to their terms “born again”.

To further confirm that the crowds were Israelites and Israelites only we list the terms of address Peter used when he preached his gospel;

[But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke out to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem,"](#)

["Men of Israel, hear these words":](#)

["Men, brothers,"](#)

["Therefore let all the house of Israel know" \[Act 2: 14, 22, 29, 36\]\(#\)](#)

And also in chapter three;

[So when Peter saw this, he replied to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this?](#)

[You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, \[Act 3:12, 25\]\(#\)](#)

No gentile is a man of Israel or a physical brother to Peter or any part of the house of Israel or a son of the prophets or a son of any covenant God made with Israel's Fathers. If the Gentile is a proselyte then he is no longer a Gentile.

Thus far we have presented to sound Scriptural reasons why there were no Gentiles in those crowds on the Feast of Pentecost. But there is further irrefutable evidence.

In Acts chapter 10 this very same Apostle Peter had journeyed to Joppa. He was hungry and had fallen into a trance. In this trance a sheet was let down from heaven three times in which were all kinds of animals. A voice called to him to rise, kill and eat;

[And he became very hungry and desired to eat. But while they made ready, an ecstasy fell on him.](#)

[And he saw the heaven opened and a certain vessel like a sheet coming down to him, being bound at the four corners and let down to the earth;](#)

[in which were all the four-footed animals of the earth, and the wild beasts, and the reptiles, and the birds of the heaven. And a voice came to him, saying, Rise, Peter! Kill and eat! \[Act 10:10-13\]\(#\)](#)

The apostle refused the voice from heaven on the grounds of faithful observance of the Law. Peter was a Law abiding Israelite;

[But Peter said, Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. \[Act 10:14\]\(#\)](#)

Please note the words “common or unclean”. What Laws would have crossed Peter's mind at the vision which made him respond with the words common or unclean? The vision of animals undoubtedly referred to the laws given to Israel regarding their diet;

[And you shall make a difference between clean animals and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean. And you shall not defile your souls by beast, or by fowl, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And you shall be holy to Me. For I, Jehovah, am holy, and have severed you from the nations, so that you should be Mine. \[Lev 20:25-26\]\(#\)](#)

Israel's diet was to remind the Jews that God had severed them from the Gentiles and Peter was about to receive an invite from a Gentile. Let the reader be assured that without this vision and voice from Heaven, Peter would have spurned the invitation with an equally emphatic “not so Lord”, see Acts 11:17. Nothing

less than the Lord's own voice would change this man's mind;

And the voice spoke to him again the second time, What God has made clean, you do not call common.

Act 10:15

What was it that God had made clean (John 1:29) and Peter was not to call common? The following statement by Peter to Cornelius clearly links the vision with Gentiles who up till this time were considered by Peter to be common and unclean;

And he said to them, You know that it is an unlawful thing for a man, a Jew to keep company with or to come near to one of another nation. But God has shown me not to call any man common or unclean.

Act 10:28

Up until Acts 10 Peter believed it was an "unlawful" thing for an Israelite to keep company with a Gentile so there were no Gentiles at Pentecost else why would Peter need to be shown? Was the Lord many years late teaching Peter something he had already known? Peter goes on to say "but God has shown me". When did God show Peter? Not at Pentecost but in the vision at Acts 10. When tradition puts Gentiles into Acts 2 it basically denies the truths of Acts 10-11:18.

Peter received a threefold vision immediately prior to three men arriving with an invitation from Gentile and when the invitation was delivered Peter received yet another confirmation, this time from the Holy Spirit;

And behold, immediately three men stood at the house in which I was, sent from Caesarea to me. And the Spirit told me to go with them, not discriminating. Act 11:11-12

The Lord told Peter that he was not to call Gentiles common or unclean since He had cleansed them. The Holy Spirit confirmed the words of the Lord by also telling Peter not to discriminate. So Peter went to Cornelius's house and then asked an incredible question;

Therefore I came without complaint, being sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me.

Act 10:29

Christian Bible student, this question of Peter's must make you think. Why ask the Gentile Cornelius what he wanted if Peter had already preached to Gentiles in Acts 2?

I am praying you have already asked the obvious question. Why would Peter need a threefold vision to go to a Gentile if they had already been baptized into "the church" at Acts 2?

And as if these things are not enough then we shall make a few final points from Acts 11.

And the apostles and brothers who were in Judea heard that the nations had also received the Word of God. Act 11:1

When did the apostles and brethren hear that the Gentiles had ALSO received the Word of God? These events are many years after Acts 2. Were these apostles and brethren also confused? See how ridiculous these believers appear to be because of our traditions? Dare we call them mistaken when in fact it's our traditions which are in gross error?

Included among the brethren were the members of the circumcision group who contended with Peter;

And when Peter had come up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them. Act 11:2-3

Why would this group contend with Peter if Gentiles had been baptized into the "church" at Acts 2? Why would they contend with Peter if in fact Gentiles had already "continued in fellowship, and (were) breaking bread from house to house" with the Jews?

Peter then fully recounts the event and concludes with these words;

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning. If God gave to them the same gift as to us, they having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to be able to prevent God?
Act 11:15, 17

If ever we wanted the final proof that there were no Gentiles at Pentecost this is it. Peter declares that Cornelius received the Holy Spirit just like the Israelites did at the beginning, which is Pentecost.

It was God who gave the Cornelius the gift so perhaps Peter would have tried to prevent God without the vision. Again, how would Peter speak like this if gentiles had already been so blessed at Acts 2?

The apostles and brethren also came to a realization:

When they heard these things, they were silent and glorified God, saying, Then God has also granted repentance to life to the nations. Act 11:18

In Acts 10 & 11 five groups or individuals confirm to us there were no Gentiles at Acts 2.

1. The Lord Himself, who had to give Peter a vision about the inclusion of the Gentiles.
2. The Holy Spirit who told Peter not to discriminate against them.
3. Peter himself, who would have refused to go had he not been given such clear commands.
4. The Circumcision group.
5. The other Apostles and brethren who finally acknowledged that God had been in this.

In the mouths of two or three witnesses will a thing be established but yet, despite these plain statements from the Word, the traditions of Christianity continue to hold sway. Were all these who were alive and involved in these events misguided, or is it that our traditions misguide?

In this small booklet we have shown that Israel is a called out company and the glory the Lord spoke and taught to His disciples was the glory on the earth of the Old Testament. We also found the disciples were full of joy and their minds were opened to understand the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament promise of the Holy Spirit was found in passages which spoke of Israel's glorious restoration and so the disciples' question in Acts 1:6 was correct. Pentecost was a feast given to Israel and at that Feast the Holy Spirit gave gifts to Jews and proselytes only. Years later Peter was sent to a Gentile after a vision to both men. The reactions of Peter, those with him and those back in Jerusalem prove that Acts 2 is not the birthday of the church but the fulfillment of a Feast for the church Israel.

The disciples were not confused and ignorant men; they knew exactly what Pentecost was about, it concerned Israel and its coming Kingdom on the earth. Israel remained God's people until the close of the book of Acts. Only in Paul's post Acts letters of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, Philemon and 1&2 Timothy do we read about the church which is His Body and the glory in the heavenly places.

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