

Pentecostal
Revival



———— JUBILEE SERIES ————

ADULT TEACHER'S MANUAL
WINTER 2015-16

Adult Teacher's Manual

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ACTS: HISTORY AND THEOLOGY

by Robin Johnston



Pentecostals have a special relationship with the Book of Acts. The pioneers of the Pentecostal movement—or as it was originally known, the Apostolic Faith movement—were intent on restoring the church to its apostolic roots. Convinced that Christianity had lost its way, they looked to the Book of Acts for the original pattern for the church and were determined to follow its path. Their spiritual experiences led early Pentecostals to read themselves into the Acts narrative. The events of the upper room in Jerusalem or at Cornelius’s house were not just two-thousand-year-old historical accounts; they were to be normative for the church today.

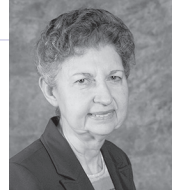
Acts contains both history and theology. Luke, the author of Acts, certainly had history in mind when he penned the book. He placed dates and geographical markers in the text so later readers could corroborate his account. He referenced governmental leaders whose names and accomplishments could be accessed through extra-biblical sources. It should be noted that Luke wrote using first-century conventions of historiography, and as a result his writings differ significantly from contemporary conventions of history writing. Therefore, it would be a mistake to apply today’s standards of history writing to ancient histories like Acts or the Gospels. But without a doubt, Acts is a work of history.

However, Luke also had theology in mind when he wrote Acts. In addition to being a work of history, it is also a work of theology. Evidence for the theological nature of Acts can be found in the prologues for both of his books, Luke and Acts. In many ways the Book

of Acts functions as the second volume of a two-volume work that we know as Luke-Acts. A cursory glance at opening verses of both Luke and Acts reveals that the prologue for Luke also serves as the prologue of Acts. In this prologue, Luke stated he was writing so Theophilus, and by extension others, might understand “those things which are most surely believed among us” and that he might “know the certainty of those things, wherein thou has been instructed” (Luke 1:1, 4). He intended to portray not only a historical record of the events as they transpired, but also the theology behind the events.

Because the primary genre of Acts is narrative, some have questioned if it can indeed teach theology. Others have suggested that at best narrative books like Acts can only illustrate doctrine. The apostle Paul was convinced otherwise. He reminded Timothy that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:16). This should not be surprising given that the primary genre of Scripture is narrative. To suggest that narrative cannot teach theology or to even suggest that the theology of narrative passages of Scripture is secondary to epistolary or didactic passages is to do injustice to the Bible. The question then is how do narrative passages teach theology?

This quarter of lessons examines the Book of Acts. I pray it will be more than an academic exercise: I pray your lives will be changed just as the lives of those in Acts were radically altered.



THE REVIVAL CONTINUES

by Karen Myers

My family first attended an Apostolic Pentecostal church when I was six years old. My mother had seen a revival advertisement in the newspaper, and she and my stepfather decided to visit one Sunday night. At the time we were attending a denominational church, but they were looking for something more.

One night during that revival, my mother, stepfather, and brother were baptized in Jesus' name. At home that night after everyone had gone to bed, my mother lay thinking about the Lord and her baptismal experience. Suddenly she began to speak in other tongues.

The following night when the pastor and the evangelist came to greet us before service, my mother told them what had happened the previous night. Before she had finished, she began to speak in tongues again. There was no doubt in the minds of the pastor or the evangelist as to whether she had received the Holy Ghost. They had seen and heard the sign of the Spirit infilling. My stepfather and brother received the Holy Ghost later.

The revival that began on the Day of Pentecost did not remain in the city of Jerusalem. Jesus Christ had told His disciples to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). As He was assembled with them before His ascension, He said, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Although only Jewish believers received the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, the

gospel soon spread to other races and other locations. When persecution caused many believers to relocate to surrounding areas, "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

As Philip preached in the city of Samaria, revival broke out. "When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). After Peter and John joined Philip, they began laying their hands on those who had been baptized, and the Samaritan believers received the Holy Ghost.

Many Jews were shocked to discover that even the Gentiles were included. As Peter preached to people who had gathered in Cornelius's house, the Holy Ghost fell on everyone in the audience. How did Peter and the men who had accompanied him know the Holy Ghost had been given to these Gentiles? "For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (Acts 10:46). That was the same sign given on the Day of Pentecost.

Today, the revival that began in Jerusalem has spread "into all the world" as Jesus commanded. Missionary reports tell of revival in North America and around the world. The gospel is still the same: Jesus Christ was crucified, was buried, and rose again. We identify with Him in the same manner Peter declared on the Day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). The revival continues!