

LOGOS

Logos Online Bible Study

First Wednesdays, 7.00–8.30 pm, on Zoom

Christian Beginnings

According to the Acts of the Apostles

Session 5 – Acts 2.14 – 41

Acts – Chapter Two

The Birth of the Church – Overview

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Pentecost: The Phenomenon (vv 1–13)

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Pentecost: Exposition & Response (vv 14–41)
Peter's Sermon & First 'Converts'

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Pentecost: Lived Reality – Community Life (vv 42–47)

Pentecost: The Phenomenon (2.1–13)



El Greco, *Pentecost*, c 1600

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each ... “in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.”

All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Pentecost – Exposition & Response: Acts 2.14 – 41

‘But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Fellow Jews (*loudaioi*) and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ In the last days (*en eschatais hêmerais*; cf LXX, *meta tauta*) it will be, God declares (cf *legei ho theos*, LXX omits), that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh (*ekcheô apo tou pneumatos mou epi pasan sarka*), and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show portents (*terata*) in the heaven above and signs (*sêmeia*) on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day (*êmeran kyriou tên megalên kai epiphânê*). ²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (*kai estai pas hos an epikalesêtai to onoma kyriou sôthêsetai*). [Joel 2.28–32; LXX, 3.1–5]

Pentecost – Exposition & Response: Acts 2.14 – 41

²² ‘Fellow Israelites (*andres Israêlitai*), listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth (*lêsoun ton Nazôraion*), a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs (*dynamesin kai terasin kai sêmeiois*) that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know – ²³ this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (*touton tê hôrismenê boulê kai prognôsei tou theou ekdoton*), you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law (*anomôn*).²⁴ But God raised him up (*hon ho theos enestêsen*), having released him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. ²⁵ For David says concerning him,

I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; ²⁶
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh will live in hope. ²⁷
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One experience corruption. ²⁸
You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence. [Psalm 16.8–11, LXX (15.8–11)]

Pentecost – Exposition & Response: Acts 2.14 – 41

²⁹ Fellow Israelites (*andres adelphoi*), I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah (*tês anastaseôs tou Christou*), saying,

He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption. [Psalm 16.10, LXX (15.10)]

³² This Jesus God raised up (*anestêsen*), and of that all of us are witnesses (*martyres*). ³³ Being therefore exalted (*hypôtheis*) at the right hand of God and having received (*labôn*) from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out (*execheen*) this that you see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend (*anebê*) into the heavens, but he himself says,

‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, ³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.”’ [Psalm 110.1, LXX (109.1)]

³⁶ Therefore let the entire house of Israel (*pas oikos Israël*) know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah (*hoti kai kyrion auton kai christon epoiêsen ho theos*), this Jesus whom you crucified (*touton ton lêsoun hon hymeis estaurôstate*).’

Pentecost – Exposition & Response: Acts 2.14 – 41

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” ³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized (*metanoêsate ... kai baptisthêto*) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven (*tô onomati Iêsou Christou eis aphesin tôn hamartiôn hymôn*), and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (*lêmpsesthe tēn dôrean tou hagiou pneumatos*). ³⁹ For the promise (*hê epangelia*) is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them (*heterois te logois pleiosin diemartyrato kai parakalei autous*), saying, “Save (*sôthête*) yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized (*hoi men oun apodexamenoi ton logon autou ebaptisthêsan*), and that day about three thousand persons were added.

Peter's First Pentecost Speech

Acts 2.17–36 (40)

(28 speeches: Peter [8], Paul [10], risen Christ, Demetrius, Festus, Gallio, Gamaliel, James, Stephen, Tertullus, town clerk at Ephesus, the Twelve)

Following Literary Convention

‘As to the speeches which were made either before or during the war, it was hard for me, and for others who reported them to me, to recollect the exact words. I have therefore put into the mouth of each speaker the sentiments proper to the occasion, expressed as I thought he would be likely to express them, while at the same time I endeavoured, as nearly as I could, to give the general import of what was actually said.’
(Thucydides [5th cent BCE], *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.22)

‘If a person has to be introduced to make a speech, above all let his language suit his person and his subject, and next let these also be as clear as possible. It is then, however, that you can play the orator and show your eloquence. (Lucian [2nd cent CE], *How to Write History*, 58)

Overview

It is highly unlikely that the speeches in Acts are verbatim records of what was actually said. Rather, drawing on whatever memories or artifacts were available, Luke has crafted literary orations, suitable for the occasion, in the spirit of the putative author, while communicating his own theological agenda.

Peter's First Pentecost Speech

Acts 2.17–36 (40)

The Structure of Peter's Sermon

Refutation ... Scriptural Elucidation

'Fellow Jews ... these are not drunk ... this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel (2.28–32) ...'

Explanation/Persuasion

'Jesus of Nazareth ... attested ... by God with deeds of power, wonders and signs ...

This Jesus God raised up and of that all of us are witnesses ...

Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah (Ps 16.8–11) ...

Exalted at the right hand of God ... received ... the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out ...'

Affirmation

'God has made him both Lord and Messiah'

Exhortation

'Brothers, what should we do?'

'Repent and be baptized ... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ...'

Peter's First Pentecost Speech

What is the Gospel – the Kerygma?

Jesus of Nazareth (*lêsoun ton Nazôraion*), a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs (*dynamesin kai terasin kai sêmeiois*) ... this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (*touton tê hôrismenê boulê kai prognôsei tou theou ekdoton*), you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law (*anomôn*) ... This Jesus God raised up (*anestêsen*) ... Being therefore exalted (*hypôtheis*) at the right hand of God and having received (*labôn*) from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out (*execheen*) this that you see and hear ... God has made him both Lord and Messiah (*hoti kai kyrion auton kai christon epoiêsen ho theos*), this Jesus whom you crucified (*touton ton êsoun hon hymeis estaurôsatē*).'

Distillation

According to God's plan ... rooted in Jesus ... what he did (credentials) ... what others did to him (rejection/crucifixion) ... what God accomplishes in and through him (resurrection, exaltation, salvation)

Peter's First Pentecost Speech

A Primitive Jerusalem Proclamation/Gospel (*Kerygma*)?

'First, the age of fulfilment has dawned ... Secondly, this has taken place through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus ... with proof from the Scriptures ... Thirdly, by virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God, as Messianic head of the new Israel ... Fourthly, the Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory . Fifthly, the Messianic Age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ ... Finally, the *kerygma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of "salvation," that is, of "the life of the Age to Come," to those who enter the elect community.'

C H Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (1944), pp 21-23

'The experience of the Christian *koinonia* has to be translated into intelligible terms for the purposes of edification (cf I Cor 14.1–19), evangelism and apologetic exposition (cf Acts 2.14ff) ... There is, we must conclude, no brief formula, no list of items, which provides a neat summary of the *kerygma*.'

James I H McDonald, *Kerygma and Didache*, p 126

Early Christian Proclamation

The 'Proclaimer' Becomes the 'Proclaimed'

'... know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

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'The message of Jesus is a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament rather than a part of that theology itself ... Christian faith did not exist until there was a Christian kerygma; ie a kerygma proclaiming Jesus Christ – specifically Jesus Christ the Crucified and Risen One – to be God's eschatological act of salvation. He was first so proclaimed in the kerygma of the earliest Church, not in the message of the historical Jesus, even though that Church frequently introduced into its account of Jesus' message, motifs of its own proclamation.'

Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* – Volume One, p 3

A Primitive 'Adoptionist' Christology?

‘... know with certainty that God has made (*epoiêsen*), both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.’

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‘The assertion that Luke is adoptionist in his christological thinking is based on texts like Acts 2:36 – ‘God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ’. The problem with this conclusion is that here, as elsewhere in Acts, Luke is using his christological language in a way that suits his narrative. From Luke’s point of view, Jesus did not in any full sense assume the roles of Lord and Messiah over all until after the resurrection and ascension. It was not that Jesus became *someone* different from who he was before, but that he entered a new stage in his career, or assumed new roles after the ascension ... The roles he assumes are roles that are appropriate, in Luke’s mind, for the exalted Jesus to assume. Jesus’ lordship is not viewed as a mere honorary title, but a description of his status and activity since at least the resurrection.’

Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p 149

Was Jesus' Theological Status (eg Lord, Messiah, Son of God) Inherited or Acquired?

Resurrection / Exaltation

‘... know with certainty that God has made (*epoiêsen*), both Lord and Messiah ...’ (Acts 2.36)

Baptism

‘In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”’ (Mark 1.9–11)

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth ... And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”’ (John 1.1, 14, 33)

Was Jesus' Theological Status (eg Lord, Messiah, Son of God) Inherited or Acquired?

Conception

‘Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way ... she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit ... “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit” ... “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel [God with us]”’ (Matt 1.18–23) ... ‘The angel said to [Mary], “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God”’ (Luke 1.35)

Eternity

‘Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’ (Phil 2.5–11)

Peter's First Pentecost Speech

Interpretative Background – Glossolalia

‘As Peter stands to address the crowd, we can appreciate ... how Luke has developed the scene in a manner true to the religious sensibilities of the gentile world. In the oracle shrines such as that of Delphi, the revelations of the god often took place in a kind of ecstatic utterance that looked like the glossolalia of Pentecost. The oracles were rendered intelligible by the shrine official called the *prophêtês* (“prophet”), who “translated” the language of the god ... Within this religious typology, Peter is presented as the cult prophet who will make the utterances of the God intelligible. But that is not what Peter does. Luke puts a twist on religious phenomenology. First, he makes the speech of the glossolalists already intelligible to the listeners; it does not require “translation.” Second, he has the prophet Peter interpret the event rather than the speech.’ (Luke Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p 53).

‘But it is not the task of him who has been in a state of frenzy, and still continues therein, to judge the apparitions and voices seen or uttered by himself ... Wherefore also it is customary to set the tribe of prophets (*tôn prophêtôn genos*) to pass judgement upon these inspired divinations; and they, indeed, themselves are named “diviners” by certain who are wholly ignorant of the truth that they are not diviners but interpreters of the mysterious voice and apparition, for whom the most fitting name would be “prophets of things divined (*prophêtai ... manteuomenôn*).’ (Plato, *Timaeus* 72 B)

Acts 2.17–21 (Joel 2.28–32)

In the last days it will be, God declares, that
I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,
and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs
on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall
be saved.

Joel 3.1–5 (LXX)

And it shall be after these things,
I will pour out of my spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out of my spirit.

I will give portents in the sky and on earth:

blood and fire and the vapor of smoke.
The sun shall be turned to darkness,
and the moon to blood,
before the great and notable day of the Lord comes.
And it shall be, everyone who calls on the name of
the Lord shall be saved ...

Peter's First Pentecost Speech

Interpretative Background – 'Day of the Lord'

'In the last days ... before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day'

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'Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness, not light; as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake. Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?' (Amos 5.18–20; 8th cent BCE)

'Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD'S wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed; for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.' (Zephaniah 1.18; 7th cent BCE)

'See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings ... Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.' (Malachi 4.1–5; 5th cent BCE)

Peter's First Pentecost Speech Interpretative Background – Messiah

‘... know with certainty that God has made, both Lord and Messiah (*kyrion kai Christon*) ...’

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‘See, Lord, and raise up for them and their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God. Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample her to destruction ... He will gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness; and he will judge the tribes of the people that have been made holy by the Lord their God ... He will distribute them upon the land according to their tribes; the alien and the foreigner will no longer live near them ... There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all shall be holy, and their king shall be the Lord Messiah.’

Psalms of Solomon 17 [1st cent BCE]; also 1 Enoch 48 [2nd cent BCE – 1st cent CE];
2 Baruch 70–72 [2nd cent CE]

Peter's First Pentecost Speech Interpretative Background - Lord

‘However, the practise of referring to Yahweh as *kyrios*, “Lord,” is said to be found only in Christian copies of the so-called Septuagint dating from the 4th century AD on, whereas in pre-Christian Greek translations of the Old Testament the name *yhwh* was written in Hebrew characters as a mark of reverence for the sacredness of the name ... All this needs further scrutiny. It is impossible to spell out the details here, but suffice is to say that there is now evidence from pre-Christian Palestine that Jews did speak of Yahweh in Hebrew as *âdôn*, “Lord,” in Aramaic as *mârê* and *mâryâ*, and in Greek as *kyrios*, with the result that it is not impossible that early Jewish Christians in Palestine itself transferred the title “Lord” or “the Lord” from Yahweh to Jesus.’

Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I – IX*, pp 201–202

Luke uses ‘Lord’ of both Jesus and God (and the Roman Emperor, Acts 25.26)

‘Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus.’ (Acts 3.19–20)

‘On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.’ (Acts 19.5)

Peter's First Pentecost Speech

Interpretative Background – Imperial Cult

‘... know with certainty that God has made, both Lord and Messiah (*kyrion kai Christon*) ...’

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‘Since Providence (*pronoia*), which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus (27 BCE – 14 CE), whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a saviour (*sôtêra*), both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god (*tou theou*) [Augustus] was the beginning of the good tidings (*euangeliôn*) for the world that came by reason of him which Asia resolved in Smyrna.’

Priene Inscription, 9 BCE

A stone decree and calendar reform issued by Paullus Fabius Maximus (proconsul of the Roman province of Asia) which aligns the local provincial calendar with the Roman calendar so that the new year begins on 23 September 23, the birthday of Emperor Augustus

The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles

CHARACTERISES CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

‘Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ... select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom ... and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit ... But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God ... Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus ... has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit ... Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers ... While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the gentiles ... he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith ... And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit ... And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us ... When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied ...’

(Acts 2.38; 6.3, 5; 7.55; 9.17, 31; 10.44–45; 11.28; 13.52; 15.8; 19.6)

The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles

ANIMATES MISSION

‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ (1.8)

Inspiration/Empowerment

‘When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.’ (4.31)

Communication (Boundary-crossing)

‘All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability ... The circumcised believers ... were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the gentiles ...’ (2.4 & 10.45)

Guidance

‘For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials ... They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.’ (15.28 & 16.6)

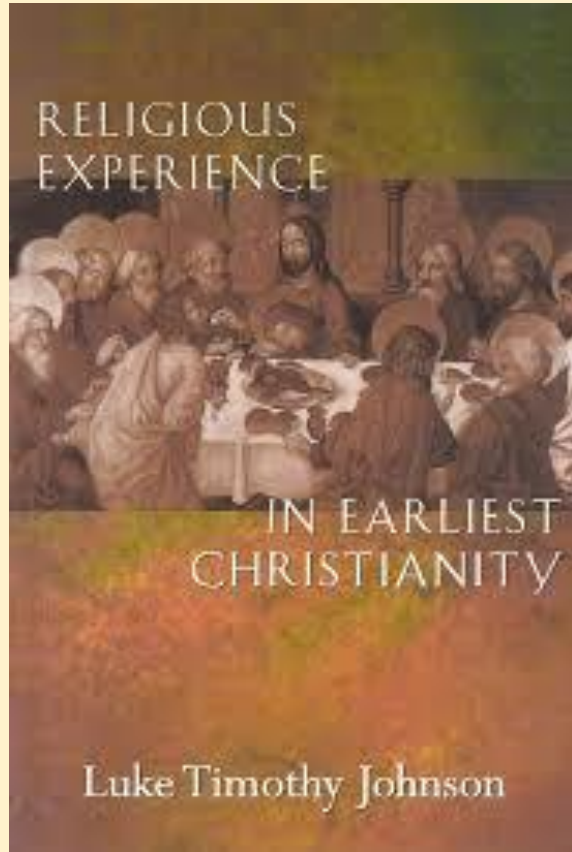
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‘Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles ... So they remained for a long time speaking boldly for the Lord, who testified to the word of his grace by granting signs and wonders to be done through them.’ (2.43 & 14.3)

Christianity Begins as a Movement of the Spirit

(Experience of the Spirit interpreted Christologically)

A Phenomenological Approach



‘Religious experience is a response to that which is perceived as ultimate, involving the whole person, characterised by a peculiar intensity, and issuing in action.’

‘Despite the diversity within earliest Christianity, a diversity so obvious that it scarcely needs underscoring, the evidence also suggests that from the beginning a certain unity of experience and conviction was sufficient to distinguish this collection of people from others in the Mediterranean world and to provide the basis for its life, movement, change, and growth.

This implicit – yet no less real – unity of experience and conviction centred on the presence of transforming power among them because of the resurrection of Jesus.’

Luke Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity* (1998), p 60 & 184

Logos Online Bible Study

First Wednesdays, 7.00–8.30 pm, on Zoom

Christian Beginnings
According to the Acts of the Apostles

Next Time
Wednesday 4th November 2026

Session 6 – Acts 2.42–47

Please read beforehand