

The Church in the New Testament

(Sunday AM — Church Campus)

Week 1: The Birth of the Church

Acts 2:36–47

The day of Pentecost marks one of the most significant events in all of Scripture. After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the apostles waited in Jerusalem as He had commanded. When the Holy Spirit came upon them, Peter stood and preached the first gospel sermon—a message that cut to the heart of thousands who had gathered in the city.

Peter’s message was not a motivational talk or an invitation to private spiritual experience. It was a proclamation of facts: Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, had been raised from the dead and exalted to God’s right hand. He was both Lord and Christ. When the crowd asked what to do, Peter’s answer was clear: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

About three thousand souls obeyed that day. God added them to the church—the universal body of the saved, which He established on that very day. What follows in the closing verses of Acts 2 is a portrait of these saved individuals assembling as the local congregation in Jerusalem: devoted to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. This passage gives us both the beginning of the universal church and the earliest picture of a local congregation following the pattern God intended.

Group Discussion: When we talk about “church”, it is only used two ways in the Bible—all Christians everywhere, without regard to time or location, and a local congregation. Why is it important to distinguish between these two uses?

Personal Reflection: When you compare the description of the early church in Acts 2:42–47 with your own experience in the local congregation, what similarities do you see? What areas might need renewed attention?

Read Acts 2:36–47

Study Questions

1. In verse 36, Peter declares that God has made Jesus “both Lord and Christ.” Why is this declaration the foundation of the church, and what does it mean for Jesus to hold both titles?

2. In verse 37, the crowd is “cut to the heart” and asks, “What shall we do?” What produced this response, and what does it teach about the role of the gospel message in bringing people to repentance?
3. In verse 38, Peter commands, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” What is the relationship between repentance, baptism, and the forgiveness of sins in this verse?
4. Peter also promises “the gift of the Holy Spirit” in verse 38. What does this gift refer to, and how should we understand that in light of the rest of the New Testament?
5. Verse 39 says the promise is “for you and for your children and for all who are far off.” What does this teach about the scope of the gospel invitation?
6. According to verse 41, those who “received his word were baptized.” What does this sequence—hearing, receiving, and being baptized—teach about how people become a part of the body of Christ?
7. Verse 42 describes four practices the early church devoted themselves to: the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Why is each of these essential, and what happens when any of them is neglected?
8. Verses 44–45 describe believers sharing possessions and meeting needs. What motivated this generosity, and what does it teach about the nature of Christian community?

9. Verse 47 says the Lord was “adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” When we say that God adds people to the church, to what are we referring? The local congregation or the universal body of Christ? Is it important to note the difference?

10. Looking at Acts 2:36–47 as a whole, what pattern does this passage establish for the church’s identity, worship, and mission?