



God's Church-Part 1

The Miraculous Launch of His Church

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Well, I was once invited and had dinner at Club 33. You know what that is? That was nice and all but I had no idea. It wasn't until later that I learned what this exclusive club at Disneyland off of New Orleans Square was. I had no idea. It was a weird place for a dinner appointment, but I was invited and I couldn't park near it and I was like, what am I doing? I have to go into the Park to do this. It was just kind of a hassle. But then later, I went back and learned about the tradition and how exclusive this club is, and I learned that it's going to cost you twenty-five grand just to join the club and then it'll cost you 12 grand a year to keep a membership in this club and I realize it's kind of a big deal. Now, had I known all of that before I went, I would have enjoyed it more. I would have taken selfies inside. I would have, you know, I certainly would have talked about it more. I would have felt more privileged, it would've been a better experience for me.

When it comes to exclusive clubs in Anaheim, there are other places you can go and have even more exclusive clubs. I mean, there's a club in midtown Manhattan and you've got to be really, you know, high-falutin person to get into that club. It's going to cost you probably twice that just to get in. And, you know, certainly I think that dues are 17 grand a year just to be a part of that. But they're much bigger places even than that. If you want to go to Trump National, there's one. It's going to cost you about \$188,000 to join that club. If you want to look for a really elite club, you can be a part of the Liberty National Club. It's a golf club, and it's just right in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, and the dues on that are astronomical. And just to get in cost you about \$488,000, half a million dollars, just to join the club.

Now, speaking of elite clubs, there's a club that's far more elite than that. As a matter of fact, the dues to get into that club are astronomical, literally, they're out of this world. To put it in biblical terms, it's so exclusive that you can't get in even with all the gold and silver in the world. Now you wouldn't know that by going to visit this club, as a matter of fact, it's not the exclusive kind of snobbish club that wants you to not be in it. Matter of fact, that people are always welcoming you into it. They always want you to come and be a part of it. They certainly want you to visit it. They want you to join it. But to get into this club, the dues, according to Peter, are that you have to have a payment that is made with the precious blood of Christ.

I don't know if you think about the Church that way, but that is the description of this thing that we call the Church of the Living God. The Church of Jesus Christ. The Church of the first-born. I mean, this is a big, big deal. It's the thing that Jesus said he came after he gave his life as a propitiation for the payment of the sins of those who would join it. He said, I'm going to build it. And he illustrated it with a seed. It's like a little seed. It's going to start really small and it's going to take over and it's going to become this gigantic tree with huge branches that are going to stretch out and all the birds of the sky are going to come and nest in this thing.

You can visit the club. You can sit and learn about the club. You can hear about what the people say about the club. But you don't join the club until you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Then you become an active member of this club. And if you're here this morning and I'm looking



you in the eye, well, then you are here in this one outpost of that club. This little geographic outpost, 2,000 years after it was launched, with all of its imperfections, with all the things that are announced from the bulletin, all the things that you have your kids that want to be a part of and go to and parking lots and programs and people. I mean, it looks on the surface rather mundane.

And yet it's so unique and so elite that in your mind you ought to step back every now and then, and we don't do it enough, and say, what is this thing that I do on the weekend when I assemble with these people, when we sing songs, when we open the Bible up and we talk about it? When our kids during the week go there and I get in a small group and we discuss the things of God. What is this organization?

I'm going to spend five weeks just talking about how important the Church is. We're going to do that by looking at the origins of the Church, how it started in Acts Chapter 2. And to remind you that we sit here in a club, if you will, a society, an organization, an organism the Bible would say, that stretches back 2,000 years and is the most important thing going on the planet. It's more important than any government, any political group. It's more important than the family. It's more important than any business. It's more important than any commodity, any service. It's the most important thing on this planet we call Earth.

And if you sit here today as someone who has a right relationship with God and you come into this room, it may seem mundane. We don't have a spire. We don't have a cathedral. We're sitting here in a business park, of all places, in South Orange County. And yet we are active right now today in something that Paul said is the pillar and foundation of the truth in this society. That's a big deal. It ought to change the way we think about it. It ought to change the way we participate in it. It ought to change the way we pray for it, the way we sacrifice for it, the way we value it, the way we talk about it. Imperfect? Sure, it's imperfect. I understand that.

You can focus on its wrinkles and its warts and you might want to do that, I guess, if you're dumb, because the Bible says that this imperfect bride of his that's got some wrinkles and spots, it's his bride. Do you love Christ? You would really be loath to dis on his bride. I don't think it would be smart. You might have lots of reasons to say, "Well, I don't know. There are a lot of things I don't like about your bride." Well, you may want to keep most of that to yourself. Because the bride of Christ, the building of Christ, the body of Christ, want to get real personal, this is the body of Christ. Something we ought to revere in our minds. Does it need correction? Sure, it does. Does it need transformation? Sometimes. Reformation? It does. I get that. But do you really think when you're lugging your kids to church and trying to get here on time for worship, I mean, do you ever really stop and think what we're doing? We're part of an organization that stretches back 2,000 years that Christ assembled out of this world to bring people from all the corners and walks of life together without reference to economic strata, without reference to their ethnic backgrounds, without reference to anything other than the fact that we have a commonality in that we were purchased by the redemptive blood of Christ. That's a big, big deal.

And I hope to, in the next five weeks, kind of lift our thinking about the Church, starting with the first 13 verses in Acts Chapter 2, where we see the birth of the Church, the miraculous birth of



the Church. And you may see the word miraculous on the subtitle of this sermon and go, "Well, you know what? That's the Bible, it's full of miracles." It's not full of miracles. It's really not. As a matter of fact, we have little periods within biblical history where we see these rashes and eruptions of the miraculous, but they're not very many. If you've been with us on Thursday nights, we've been studying something we call Christian apologetics. One thing we've looked at is the Bible makes some pretty outlandish claims by talking about the suspension of natural law, the natural order being suspended by God. Well, it happens, but it doesn't happen that often. It didn't happen that often in biblical history. In just a few periods of time we see that so that God could attest to the validity and the truthfulness of what he's doing in this world.

And the biggest rash of all, the reason sometimes we read the book of Acts and go, wow, that's crazy stuff that's happening there. Well, it is kind of crazy, but it's because that most frequently condensed group of miracles in the Bible is all because God is trying to say, "I am starting a thing, an organization. I'm starting a movement, a club, a society, an organism that I'm going to call my body, my bride, my building, and you are going to see this thing expanded. I'm going to build my church. The gates of hell aren't going to prevail against it. And you are going to be its messengers. You are going to take that message and you're going to spread it." And he said it to them in the first century: to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and you going to get it out to the ends of the earth.

Well, in the first 13 verses of Acts, Chapter 2, when the Church is birthed, we see all the nations coming to Jerusalem where it starts and it's a good poetic reminder of what our job is. We looked at our job for several weeks in Chapter 1, but as we start Chapter 2, I want you to think about what's going on here as God puts his imprimatur, he puts his fingerprints all over this dynamic and miraculous launch of the new thing in the new covenant called the Church.

Start in verse 1. I'm going to read through verse 13 in the English Standard Version. Follow along with your eyeballs in your copy of God's Word. I want to start here in verse 1 when it says, "When the day of Pentecost arrived..." Pentecost. That was one of the four festivals, one of the four major festivals of Israel. It was a pilgrimage feast where everyone was supposed to come into Jerusalem. Pent-e-cost. You can see that the derivation of that word, can't you? Pentecost, 5, you see 5, well it's really the word for 50 and it's 50 days after the Passover. Christ was crucified there on the Passover and we've had a span of 50 days now. We had Christ for 40 days teaching and talking about the coming kingdom of God and telling them to stay in Jerusalem because the Spirit of God is going to come upon you. And finally, it's about to happen. Something different is going to happen in their relationship with God and it's all going to happen on Pentecost. Which happens to be a feast where everyone from the corners of the world, if they're devout and they believe and subject themselves to the law of Moses, they're going to come to Jerusalem and celebrate this very important feast of in-gathering, the Feast of Harvest.

"So when the day of Pentecost had arrived," God chose this day to birth his Church, "they were all together." Who's the "they"? Well look back again in Chapter 1, you'll see we have 120 people here who are gathered in an upper room, and they're doing what Christ said. They're waiting for something, something that was promised by God, promised by the Father, something all the way back to Ezekiel 34, Jeremiah 31. Some new connection, a new relationship with God's Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, was about to take place. "When they were all together in one

place," when all that happened, "and suddenly there came from heaven," verse 2, "a sound," now here's a good word to underline, "LIKE a mighty rushing wind." What is it? It's a sound. A sound like a mighty rushing wind. So that means it's not a mighty rushing wind. Their hair probably wasn't getting messed up. Their clothes weren't flapping around, but it was a sound like you might hear and all of us have probably, at one point or another, heard a really heavy wind, maybe going through the branches and leaves of the tree, and you hear that it's a loud noise. It would take a good sound system to recreate that kind of noise. And here it was a sound and it sounded like a mighty rushing wind. And there's a neat play on words there, because in Scripture, the word for "wind" is also the word for "spirit." We talk about pneumatic tools. Those are air tools for your air compressor. Talk about pneumonia. Right? Having a problem with your lungs and your breathing, your air.

So we have a sound that sounds like a wind, which is, again, a connection to what Jesus said to Nicodemus about the Spirit of God. And it's coming, it's mysterious, we don't know where it comes from, we see its effect, it's like a blowing wind. And then it says that wind, that sound, "it filled the entire house where they were sitting." It's a pretty big house, a pretty big place. We're going to learn it's near the Temple Mount here. So they're hearing that and then you get something that's not just phonetic in your ears, you get something now that's photonic with your eyes. You're going to see something here. And they reported seeing this: "And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them."

Now, just like I had you underline the word "like" in verse 2, you can underline "as of" in verse 3. "Divided tongues AS OF fire." It wasn't fire. No one singed their foreheads, their hairs weren't, you know, melted. They didn't get burnt. But it was some kind of representation that was bright like a fire and it looked like tongues of fire, like in the fire ring outside, you might see at some hotel or something and you see that fire ring and it's got that shape to it, that plume shape to it. That picture of something there that now separates into various pieces. You've got 120 people in the room and they all have this photonic symbol that was like "as of" fire and it appeared and rested on each one of them. So I got fire and I got wind as a phonic-kind of representation of the Spirit and a visual fire, a picture of something that looks like fire, that is a visual representation of it. "And now," verse 4, "they were filled with the Holy Spirit."

Jesus had talked about as recorded by Luke in Luke 24, that they would be "clothed with power from on high." "When the Spirit comes upon you" in Chapter 1, he said "you would be baptized," epsilon nu, "in the Spirit," by the Spirit. So, we've got a lot of words to describe this, but it's described here when it actually happens as the word "filled," because Jesus had said the Spirit is with you, certainly active in the Old Testament, active in the gospels, active in Chapter 1. But now there's a changed relationship. He's not just going to be "with" you, Jesus said he's going to be "in" you. So some kind of changed relationship, more on that in a minute. And the expression of that, verse 4, was "they began to speak in other tongues." So I got something that looks like the shape of what you might see as a tongue, I guess. And then what they do is they get filled with the Spirit and they start speaking in other, the Greek word is "glossa." So we get the word "glossary" from that, "words." The idea here is a language. You can rightly translate it that way. And even in old English, sometimes we speak that way, "They spoke the mother tongue." Right? The language, they spoke the language.

And here were these people from Galilee and they spoke, most of them from Galilee, they spoke in other languages "as the Spirit gave them utterance." The Spirit enabled them to speak these other languages. Now, why would that have any relevance? Well, because you've got everyone coming to the pilgrimage feast, verse 5. "Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem, Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven." The hyperbolic way to say, you know what? People came from wherever they were. If they believed in the law of Moses and they were going to be faithful to the precepts of the Word, they were going to go to Jerusalem during the Feast of Pentecost. So they're coming from everywhere. "And at the sound the multitude came together." So, they're out there gathering, probably there in the temple courts and the Temple Mount and the assembly areas, they hear this upper room and a loud noise that sounds like some kind of storm that's breaking out over there. They don't see any clouds. It's not like there's any visual manifestation outside and they hear this, so they're drawn to see what's going on there. And it says, "And at the sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered." Why? Bottom of verse 6, "Because each one was hearing them speak in his own," dialect, his own "language."

So that was weird. Why? Well, verse 7, "They were all amazed and astonished." I got bewildered, amazed and astonished. Why? Because they were saying this: "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" That's not a slam per se, but they are Galileans. I mean, these aren't the professors who might be, you know, knowing all these languages, perhaps from some educated group of scribes. No, this is the common folk from Canaan, and from Nazareth and from Capernaum. I mean, these were people from up north. I mean, they're kind of country folk. They're here in their Galilean outfits with their Galilean accent, with their Galilean look and they're talking to us in our own language. They can't compute it. Verse 8, "How is this that we hear, each of us in his own native language?" What kind of people were there? "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia." Think about that, between the Tigris and Euphrates. I mean, these were the powerhouse countries. I mean, that was the ancient valley of Babylon in Assyria.

You had "Judea and Cappadocia." You take your map out and identify all these places, "Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia," verse 10, "Egypt and parts of Libya," northern Africa, "belonging to Cyrene, and visitors" all the way out from west, from "Rome, both Jews," they were native Jews, some of them, they just happen to live in other places, "and proselytes, people who had become devout proselytes, they'd become converts to Judaism, both "Cretans," those who lived in the islands out there "and Arabians," who lived in those desert villages. They came from all over. And what they were saying is this is crazy. How is it that we're hearing in our own native language? "They were telling," bottom of verse 11, "they were telling in our own tongues," our own languages, "the mighty works of God." Verse 12, "And all of them, they are all amazed and perplexed." I mean, look at these words we have: bewildered, amazed, astonished, perplexed, "saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'" How can these country bumpkins speak our language? "But others were mocking, saying they're filled with new wine."

You might imagine, we get out of this upper room and we go meet with the masses. It would be like us here, a bunch of, you know, South Orange Countians out on the patio there, and let's just say we had this big international fair. We had all these people from all over the place. Then we get out there, 120 of us, and we start speaking to all of them about the mighty works of God, and



we're speaking in their own native languages, their own dialects from where they came from. I mean, we have never learned French, but you're talking to a Canadian from up there and you can speak in French. Well, they know English and you could speak in English, but you're speaking in their native language. Or you're talking from someone from Mexico and maybe they can speak English and we could speak in English, but instead you're speaking to them in Spanish and you never learned Spanish. You're sitting there, maybe as a Galilean, you were raised in Capernaum and all of a sudden now you're speaking to someone in Latin, this is from out west. Or you're speaking in a Coptic dialect of Africa. I mean, this is an amazing thing and everyone goes, "Wow, that's crazy." And maybe you're overhearing someone because you're from Mexico, you know Spanish and English, but you don't know French and you're hearing someone speak in French and go, "Oh man, what is that guy, drunk?" And they say, "They're full of new wine, maybe."

This was the birth of the Church. The thing that should impress us most about the Church is that it is the work of God through the indwelling of the Spirit and verses 1 through 4 remind us of that through the picture of wind and the picture of fire and the idea of them actually being in-dwelt with the Spirit, which is a different kind of relationship. It's not that the Spirit was absent, but now a new kind of empowerment, a new kind of relationship that God has with his people. You ought to respect the power of that, because the Bible says that in this club, unlike any other organization, the Spirit of God dwells here in a special way. That's a powerful organization. I want to be in the club that God is a part of.

Number one, you need to "Respect the Power of the Church." Why? Because the Church is the place where God's Spirit is active. Doing what? Well, doing what we can't do on our own. Well, what can't we do on our own? The very things that they're asked to do. Go and make disciples of all the nations. Hey, be the lowly things of the world and go shame the wise. Go take the people who just are of no description in the world and go out there and stand up before the intellectuals of the world and preach the gospel and watch and see hearts change. Or be like Christ said specifically to Saul of Tarsus when he knocked him off his horse on the way to Damascus and said, "I'm going to turn you into a representative who is going to turn people from darkness to light. I'm going to use you to do that."

Now, how can people do that? Well, we can't do that. The task is impossible. But God is going to empower us to do what we can't otherwise do and things that we would naturally shy away from, talking about Christ, and as Chapter 4 says, the Spirit of God is going to embolden us. We're going to be able to boldly stand up and say things that we wouldn't otherwise be able to say. When they drag you in front of the opponent, what did Jesus say? "Don't worry about what you're going to say. In that day, the Spirit of God will give you what to say." The Spirit of God is present in this Church. He's present in allowing us to see hearts changed. There are people I looked, especially in this last service we had before this one, and I saw people that I knew who at one time were absolutely opposed to the gospel. And I looked in their eyes saying, "Wow, look, they're here sitting under the teaching of the Word, singing worship songs and I knew them when they did not love, did not care and opposed God." Think about that. God is changing hearts.

We can't do that. The power of the Church is so you can join either club in the world and you can join a club that God says, I'm putting my Spirit there in a very special active way. Now, what



happens in the bottom of verse 4 through verse 7? He puts his imprimatur on it and makes it very clear, I'm going to show you that this is not a human work. It wasn't Peter, James and John saying, "Let's drop a 501c3 and get an organization together. Why don't you be the president, you be the treasurer. Great. Sign that up. We're going to start an organization called the Church." That is not what happened. God said, this is my work, my Spirit, I'm going to change those people and like fire that purifies and wind that blows things out and cleans things, I'm going to take up residence in a special way in this one organization on the planet called the Church. And then I'm going to make it clear to everyone else who looks at it, this is not a man-made thing, this is a God-made thing.

Number two, you need to "Affirm the Divine Origin of the Church." Jot that down. Affirm the fact that the organization that you are a part of right now, if you're a Christian, the Church of Jesus Christ, in this particular outpost, is one that didn't start because some people got together and thought, let's start a thing called the Church. It started because God said, I'm going to show you this is my doing. My signature is on it. And just like I'm going to allow them to do for 2,000 years what they cannot do on their own, I'm going to show at the outset of this that these individuals who start this Church are going to do things that they can't do and everyone's going to be able to see it and objectively know it is a miraculous, supernatural start. And what is that? Let's take a bunch of Galileans and have them speak in the languages of the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the Mesopotamian residents, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, Cretans, the Arabians. Let's have them be able to speak to all of them fluently so that they will hear in their own languages, their own dialect, their own native language, the mighty works of God. So let's have them start teaching and preaching in languages that they could not possibly know how to speak. And everyone's going to sit back and be, I guess our words are, verse 6, bewildered, verse 7, amazed and astonished. Why? Because you cannot possibly explain that in natural terms.

God has started the Church, and he started it with a bang. He started it literally with a miracle. He started it with something that could not be denied. This is not human. This is supernatural. Did it happen very often? Less than 100 times, by my count, in Scripture do we see God reaching in and suspending the natural order of things? Here's one of them. You want to learn a language even today? You want to go preach in some other language in Papua New Guinea? You want to go to some out of the way village in Africa? I mean, well, then you're going to have to study the language and learn how to speak in that language because it takes a lot of time, it's hard. If I dropped you out of an airplane with a parachute into all these various places in the world, I mean, how in the world could you possibly communicate with them even today? I mean, you better bring your Google Translate with you. Well, in the first century, it made it very clear this was a divinely originated organization by God, showing people, every skeptic that was out there could not deny they were bewildered, astonished and amazed that these people could speak in languages they had not learned. That's a big, big deal. You have to study, languages are hard, it's a tough thing.

We take our discipleship manual, for instance. We're going down to Rwanda. We have to translate it into that language. We translated it into several languages, but it's a lot of work. Got to find the right translators. It's a lot of work to do that. It's not easy. We need skilled people who



know linguistics, know both languages, and that's a hard thing. It's not hard for God and he wants to make it clear this is what I'm doing.

Now, there's no real confusion in this passage, really, about what's happening here. I mean, the list of nations that are about to take place in verses 8 through 11, clearly them saying it over and over again. They spoke in other languages, other glossas, other tongues. They were hearing them in their own language. They were speaking in their own native language, verse 8. We're hearing them, verse 11, in our own tongues. So we know what's going on here.

But when you say the word tongues, you're thinking of something different because you're a part of the modern era. Matter of fact, you know something - a group of people called the Pentecostals. Now you can see, verse 1, where that comes from. Right? Pentecostals say, well, we do that tongues thing, among some other things we claim to have happen among us, because we are doing the stuff that happened on Pentecost. So they take their name from this Jewish feast and they say that's what we do. Or maybe you say, well, I thought they were called the charismatics. Well, there are Pentecostals and they say we do those things and then there are charismatics, which is another way to describe a varied group of people, but where they get their name, that "charisma." Charisma, being Greek means "gift." And they're saying we believe in the gifts of the Spirit.

Well, it's funny the way they say that is as though people who aren't charismatic don't believe in the gifts. Of course, we believe that God gifts people in the Church. But what they're saying is all this supernatural stuff, we believe that that's going on and continues to go on now, and should be the normative part of church activity and church behavior, and that God's club should be characterized by that. Well, that's a recent affirmation. Matter of fact, for nineteen hundred years, I mean, the Church basically went through the reality from the second century. We can look at historians and say, well, we understand the apostles brought with them a group of miraculous events that are not replicated in the second century or the third century or the fourth century. I mean, read the early church fathers and read about what they say regarding the miraculous events of Pentecost and the miraculous events that we're going to see periodically throughout the book of Acts. Well, that took place then.

It wasn't until 1901 in the recent era when we started to have a rising up of a group of people calling themselves Pentecostals or charismatics or what was later called by John Wimber, the third wave of the Holy Spirit. Well, God kind of went dormant in these areas, and a lot of it they would blame on the Church itself. But now he's reviving all that. And so all that stuff is taking place today. Well, you may be looking at the word "tongues" and trying to define what's going on in churches today based on something in the Bible, but it's certainly not coming from this passage, because this passage right here is clear what's happening. A verifiable, no one can debate it, everyone can objectively see it, a miracle of learning and speaking in a language you never studied and doing it instantaneously.

Well, what about First Corinthians 14? Well, I got 15 minutes left so I can turn you over to my take on First Corinthians 14 and my understanding of what that is and what's going on in Corinth on the back of the worksheet. I did five hours of speaking on that particular passage, looking



verse by verse through that. If you'd like to look at that, that's all available, all downloadable for free online. Lots of things written in the last 50 years that try to help us understand why what went on in the 20th century and now continues on in a great, accelerated speed, particularly in places like South American and around the world, in the Pentecostal and charismatic movement, help you explain how that doesn't square up, by and large, with what we read in Scripture. But I'll leave that for your homework. Today let me just say what I'm trying to say here and that is, know this, the organization you're part of was founded on the beginning of a group of events, including the very first group of events, and that is 120 people speaking in languages they'd never learned. That reminds me I'm a part of an organization that was divinely launched. You should affirm that. That should raise our level of understanding regarding the Church of Jesus Christ.

Then he lists, in verses 8 through 11, those countries. There are a lot of people there and they were saying, "Listen, I saw a lot of people from a lot of different countries there in that place and we heard them speaking in our language. I just loved the fact that Luke, under the guidance of the Spirit, wrote all these things down and itemized them for us. That's a long list of places. What it reminds me of is that the whole point of Chapter 1 was wait for the Spirit and then you're going to be witnesses all over the planet, to the ends of the earth and the book of Acts unfolds all that. Well, here's a little preview of it. I'm going to bring together the nations because they're going to be here under the prescription of the Mosaic Law and now get out there and start talking to them, and I'm assuming the works of God, as we'll see in a second, are the things that Jesus said we should talk about. That is, the Christ has come and he's given his life and he's forgiving sins and he's changing people's hearts and all the fulfillment of the prophecies are in Christ. So I'm assuming they're starting by sharing that good news of the kingdom and how it works in terms of Christ being the King.

But right now, the nations are there. In a sense, it's hard not to make this poetic contrast, you saw in the Tower of Babel, all these people scattered when their languages were confused and now God brings these nations together. In this one scene at the start of the Church on the first day of the Church, here is God bringing people together and clarifying through a group of Galileans the message of God by speaking in all of the languages that they did not know. Now the gospel, symbolically pulling together people, no matter if they're from any part of the world, those who are drawn by God together to fill up the Church of every tongue, tribe and nation. Surely, all those places, as they took the message back of what they heard, that miracle on the Temple Mount that particular day, that was the seed of the gospel as the missionary efforts went out in the book of Acts. And I love the fact that it is a preview. I mean, talk about God teeing it up for them. Well, here it is. Look, all the nations, they're seeing the miraculous start to the Church. Now get out there and do the work, make disciples of all the nations.

I'd like you to think about the Church that way. Number three, you need to think about the Church having a terminus, that there is a completion to it. You and I, as a part of this club, should "Seek the Completion of the Church." There's a club here, but there are only so many memberships and God has picked out people from every tongue, tribe and nation to be a part of this group and our job is to get everyone in their seat and ready to go. It's much like being at an elementary school auditorium where there's this very important thing that you want to see. Maybe it's a play, maybe it's a band, it's something and it's behind the curtain. The principal

comes out on the stage and stands behind the microphone and says, "Children, children, get in your seats and we're not going to start this thing until you get in your seats." Now, if you're sitting there in the front row and can't wait for this show to start, I know what you're going to do. A little busybody, you're going to run around and say, "Sit down. Sit down. Tommy, sit down. Susan, sit down." Why? "Because I want to see this show start."

You know, there's something called the Times of the Gentiles. Well, here's a good list of Gentile nations in the first century. And according to Romans 11, the Times of the Gentiles is going to be fulfilled and everyone's going to get in their seat. And when they get in their seat and that Times of the Gentiles is fulfilled, it says in Romans 11, then we're going to see all the promises of the Old Testament fulfilled that weren't fulfilled at the first coming. The second coming is going to be inaugurated.

Matter of fact, scroll down to Chapter 3. Chapter 3, when Peter is preaching, he says this, Acts Chapter 3, verse 18. Look at the two comings of Christ in this passage. Verse 18, "But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets," Peter's preaching, Acts 3:18. "What God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled." All the things we talk about at Christmas, that the coming of Christ, it's all been fulfilled in the coming of Christ. Now he says, "Repent." Now the message is left. You've got to now trust in the gospel. "Repent, therefore, turn back, that your sins may be blotted out." Now that we get, we get it. I want to share the gospel because I want their sins to be forgiven. I love them. If I love them, I'm going to share the gospel. I want them to get right with God. But here's the purpose clause. Verse 20, "That times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

I guess there's an altruistic motive in evangelism. Right? I want you to get your sins forgiven. It's like when Tommy's rear end hits the chair in the elementary school auditorium, all of their sins get blotted out, Tommy's sins get blotted out and Suzy's sins get blotted out. "Hey, sit down because you'll get your sins forgiven." But there's a bigger picture here. Sit down because a show isn't going to start till everyone gets in their seat. "That the times of refreshing may come from the presence of Lord, that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus." He's going to send him back, Second Coming. "Whom heaven must receive until," there's a word to highlight, "until the time for restoring all things about which God spoke," talk about the promises of the Old Testament, "by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago."

There were two mountain tops in the coming of Christ that the Old Testament prophets looked at, the first coming of Christ as the suffering servant, the second coming of Christ as the reigning king. Between that is a Church that is proclaiming the message of forgiveness in Christ, and it's called the Times of the Gentiles. The mystery of God at work in the present age in the Church, getting everyone to get in their seat so the show can start. And then all the promises of the Old Testament that relate to the King and the reign of Christ on Earth will be inaugurated. "Tommy, sit in your seat. You'll get your sins forgiven." But you know what? "One of the reasons, selfishly," with a godly selfishness, "I want you to get saved, it's because we want Christ to come back."

Do I not quote this principle all the time from Second Peter Chapter 3? You should "count his patience as salvation." You should understand that "he's not slow in keeping his promises, as



some count slowness, but he is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but all to come to repentance." And the all, trust me in this, the all clearly in Scripture, he's got a set of people from every tongue, tribe and nation. There are people who are called by his name in every city. That was the picture in the book of Acts. Go in there and find him and get him in his seat. Why do I want to grow the Church? I want to grow the Church, not just so people get saved, certainly not for us. I want to grow the Church so that his club can have every membership filled up. Once they are, Christ returns. I love this club, but I want this club to get wrapped up. I want to see the completion of the Church, bottom of verse 11, "We hear them telling in our own tongues," our own languages, "the mighty works of God."

Amazing how many commentaries, if you look through the scholars that are writing on this, I mean, they don't say much about what the mighty works of God were. I mean, what could they possibly be talking about? Well, people were hearing them. I can only imagine, like I taught on Thursday night, speaking of Jesus there, as the paralytic gets taken through that thatched roof and brought down, the tiles are removed. He comes down and Jesus sees the faith of this crew and he looks at this guy who is paralyzed, and Jesus says, "Hey, your sins are forgiven." And they sneer at him, of course. And he looks at them and he goes, "Hey, which is easier for me to do, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'take up your mat and walk'?" Right? Get up and walk. That's a good rhetorical question that Jesus assumes we know the answer to, but do you know the answer to that? To have sins blotted out? Well, that would be much harder to say you're forgiven with authority and truthfulness. "How is that guy going to be forgiven by you?" Well, that's a big, big thing. But Jesus says that's the real point.

So just so you can see that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, I'll show you then. Great. You want to see some objective proof? "Get up and walk." And the man gets up and walks. And you know what they said, and I quoted it this Thursday night, what they said, they were all astonished and amazed. "We've seen extraordinary things today." That's what they said. "We've seen a guy here claiming to forgive sins on behalf of God and proving it by having people get up and walk." I mean, I got to think and 120 people who are out there sharing that had seen Jesus do the things he did, they were talking about this Christ who can forgive sins, who has mastery over creation, who proved by his miraculous signs that he was who he said he was. They were talking about the mighty works of God, of seeing the Christ raised from the dead. I can only imagine the kinds of things they were sharing, but that's what the Church does. It shares the message. It is a teaching organization. Now, some, they get it, they get it, and they want more. "They're all amazed," verse 12, "and they were saying to one other, what does this mean?" But then you always got people who don't get it and they don't want to get it. Maybe they didn't like what they were hearing. So, they were mocking and they had reasons to dismiss them and disparage them. "Nah, they're probably drunk."

The Church is a teaching organization. You ought to devour that. You ought to want that, you ought to drive after that. You ought to understand that that's what the church is doing. We are teaching the knowledge of the Lord, that's what Jesus said. Salvation. What is eternal life? It's knowing you, he says in his prayer, speaking to God, the Father, and Jesus Christ whom you've sent, speaking of himself. It's about, as Peter said, growing in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's about Jesus being that good shepherd who feeds his sheep. He leads them,



and as Jeremiah says, "I'm going to give you shepherds after my own heart, and they will feed you with knowledge and understanding."

It's interesting that the very first act of the Church is teaching. They start teaching. Number four, you need to "Understand the Teaching of the Church." Matter of fact, that's not even stated strongly enough. You ought to crave the teachings of the Church, you ought to devour the teachings of your church. You ought to throw yourself into getting as much of the teaching of the Church as you can. This is about Christ and understanding Christ. He gave the apostles to us to leave us a body of prophetic work that is in black and white, in propositional truth and God has given teachers and shepherds to feed us an understanding of that. It's about us being in discipleship, in small groups, sharing our insights on God's Word. It's about teaching.

It's a weird organization that you are a part of here. Go join a bowling league and you're going to go throw a ball at pins. Go join a surfing league, club, whatever. You're going to go surf all afternoon. Join the mountain biking group. You're going to go mountain biking. But in this club, join this group, you're just going to sit around here, people talk at you and lecture at you, they are going to expect you to pull out your laptop and take notes and pull out your notebook and write down what you're learning. Then we're going to send your kids down the hall. And they are going to get taught, taught, taught. Every classroom right now across our campus is filled with teaching. Teaching is how the Church starts. That's exactly what's going to pick up in verse 14. We'll see it next time. Peter stands up and he starts addressing them and he teaches them.

You ought to eat it up. You ought to be about it. You can have some people who are going to want more, "What does this mean? Tell me more." You're going to have people in verse 13 who are going to mock you and deride you and exclude you. Fine, they did that to Christ, but it's all about the teaching, that you can be grounded in the truth. Matter of fact, the Old Testament prophets look forward to a time when "the knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth like the waters cover the sea." He wants us, through the teaching and the Spirit's work in that teaching, to know, for instance, take one attribute, the love of God, to know the height and the depth and the breadth and the length of God's love. Understand the teaching of the Church.

You know, I went to Club 33. I thought I just go into a dinner, but they didn't tell me before I went there, "Hey, you got to wear a coat." I don't know if they changed the dress code since then but I know they got one. You want to go have lunch at the core club in Manhattan, you got a dress code. You want to be a part of Liberty National, you better wear the right clothes.

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he said, "I've written these things to you so that you might know how to behave in the household of God, the pillar and foundations of truth," the Church of Jesus Christ. I want you to know how to function there. We have a great organization that we're a part of. Does it have wrinkles and spots? Yeah, it does. We're working on ironing those out and scrubbing those spots out. We're working hard to make the Church all it should be. But please know what a great thing that we are a part of that should affect how you live, how you think, how you conduct yourself in this, how you prioritize it, whether or not you decide to be in it or in that program or part of that thing or in this small group. This is the Church of Christ. Value it. How



privileged we should be to be a part of it. For four more weeks, we'll be looking at the greatness of the Church and I want you to be here next time as we get into Peter's explanation of all this.

Let's pray. God, thanks for the Word of God that reminds us of the privilege we have being a part of the Church of Christ. Give us a greater respect for it. Help us to be less of a critic of it and more of a supporter of it, one who helps to make it better.

Let us find in our own hearts a great love for the church that's filled with people that, as Paul reminded us, who were purchased by the blood of Christ. Peter said the same thing, but Paul said that. Look at this church. It's filled with people who had to get in only by the purchase price of Christ's own blood. So God, give us a greater appreciation. Let us do what I didn't do about a club I was invited to, to value it, to enjoy it more, to speak of it more highly, to be the kind of person who realizes what a great privilege it is to be a part of it. God, we're humbled by that and want to get more excited about that as we study it in this great chapter, the Second Chapter of Acts. God, we love you very much for your Word. Give us a deeper understanding of it and dismiss us now with a great sense of privilege.

In Jesus name. Amen.