

Opening The Kingdom

Continuing our discussion from last week, we turn to the book of Acts. In the first four verses of chapter two, we are told that the 12 apostles were gathered together on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to speak with “other tongues” as the Spirit gave them utterance. We should understand by verse eight that these “tongues” were not a matter of some sort of vocal ‘jibberish’, as some would have us to believe, but were the actual languages of the various peoples gathered in that place. Verses nine through eleven tell us of the variety of nationalities that were gathered there. These people understood what the apostles were preaching in their “own languages”. The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to be understood in actual languages that they had not known before this time.

Peter is shown to be the main speaker or preacher at this event and began to raise his voice (verse 14), and preached the first “gospel sermon” of the New Testament. The main focus of his sermon was Jesus, the Nazarene. He spoke of Jesus being the Son of God and how God had validated Him by means of miracles, wonders and signs and that He had been killed on a cross at their hands, but had been raised up by the power of God and had been exalted to the right hand of God. The stinging climax to the sermon to those gathered there on that day was the fact that they had crucified the “One” whom God had made “both Lord and Christ” (verse 36).

Hearing this and obviously believing Peter’s words, they were “pierced to the heart” (verse 37). Their first response was the question, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter’s answer to them was to “repent and to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins...” (verse 38). Friends, Peter had just used the “keys to the kingdom” that Jesus spoke to him about back in Matthew 16:19.

Acts 2:40-41 tell us that Peter continued to teach and persuade those who were listening and that those who “received his words” were baptized. That day about 3000 souls were added to them. From verse 47 we understand that “the Lord was adding to their number daily, those who were being saved”.

The kingdom had come with power (Mark 9:1). The church had been established there on that day of Pentecost. Peter’s use of the “keys to the kingdom” had been successful. From that day forward, the Lord has continued to add the penitent and obedient to His church. There are, in New Testament scriptures, three phrases that are used interchangeably; “the church”, “the body of Christ”, and “the kingdom”. More about that next week. Until then, may God’s word be your “lamp and light”. (Psa. 119:105)