

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes January 3, 2007*

*Acts 2:37-47*

- 37: Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart,  
and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles,  
"Brethren, what shall we do?"
- 38: And Peter said to them,  
"Repent, and be baptized  
every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ  
for the forgiveness of your sins;  
and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- 39: For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off,  
every one whom the Lord our God calls to him."
- 40: And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying,  
"Save yourselves from this crooked generation."
- 41: So those who received his word were baptized,  
and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
- 42: And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,  
to the breaking of bread  
and the prayers.
- 43: And fear came upon every soul;  
and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
- 44: And all who believed were together and had all things in common;
- 45: and they sold their possessions and goods  
and distributed them to all, as any had need.
- 46: And day by day,  
attending the temple together  
and breaking bread in their homes,  
they partook of food with glad and generous hearts,
- 47: praising God and having favor with all the people.  
And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

## Discussion Notes:

### Introduction:

- We're at the beginning of a new year, which offers us an opportunity to start over again; to try, I admit, once again to improve ourselves in those areas, maybe many areas in our lives where we fall short, not just of God's expectations, but of our own. Where do begin?
- This was a question some men once posed to Peter after his first sermon: "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"
- This is what we will discuss today on **Deep In Scripture**.

## Welcome to the first episode in the second year of *Deep in Scripture*:

- Hope you had a blessed Christmas ... and thank you ...
- Website; phone numbers; special = RTB&CIY brochure; Scripture forum;
- **1<sup>st</sup> year of DIS: Mt / Sermon on the Mount = Jesus core teachings**
  - Q: How were these teachings then understood, passed along, & lived out in the early Church? How are we to receive them & live them today?
- **2<sup>nd</sup> year of DIS: St. Paul's Ltr to the Ephesians:**
  - How did Paul pass on the teachings of Christ?  
*"In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:13-14)*
  - A very important & popular NT epistle: 100s of commentaries!
  - Used by nearly every Christian tradition to defend their own theological perspective.
  - **Three important Criteria for interpreting Scripture: (CCC, 111-114)**
    1. Be especially attentive "to the content and unity of the whole Scripture."
    2. Read the Scripture within "the living tradition of the whole Church."
    3. Be attentive to the analogy of faith.
  - For this reason, we must not pull Ephesians out of context ... or read back into it our modern presumptions.
  - We'll begin our Intro to Eph in Feb, but from the start we recognize:
    - Many scholars question authorship & destination...
    - Not enough evidence to question Pauline authorship;
    - Very likely a circular letter to the churches in / around Ephesus;
  - Essentially:
    - The manuscript of a homily from an elderly bishop, imprisoned for his preaching of the Gospel, dictated to his private secretary, to be read in the liturgies of the churches he planted many years before, with a message specifically to the newly baptized, summarizing what they must believe and how they must live now that they are in Christ.
- But first, in Jan., we'll look at the background of these churches to whom Paul was writing:
  - How did they first receive the faith? What were their particular struggles? What were the issues they struggled with as new & growing Christians? And why was it necessary for St. Paul to write this letter from prison?
  - This week: Acts 2:37-47 ... the first seeds of faith;
  - Next week: Acts 15 ... the first counsel of the Church
  - Jan 17 & 24: Acts 18:24-19:22 ... the Church established in Ephesus;
  - Jan 31: Acts 20:17-38 ... St. Paul's final instructions

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## Twenty Things We Can learn about this earliest gathering of the Church:

### 1. "they" (37)

- "Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven... Phrygia and Pamphylia ..." 2:5-10

### 2. "heard this, they were cut to the heart," (37)

- Apostolic preaching & oral tradition (2 Thes 2:15)
- The work of Grace in converting (i.e., Eph 1:13-14)

### 3. "and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" (37)

- These were VERY dedicated, faithful Jews, But they recognized, in response to Peter's gospel message of the death & resurrection of Jesus their Messiah, that what they had / knew was insufficient!
- The first step in conversion: "poverty of spirit"

### 4. "And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized'" (38)

- Continuing the message of John the B and Jesus;
- Note emphasis on baptism NOT on believing! (presumed)
- *"Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..." (1Ptr 3:21)*

**5. "in the name of Jesus Christ" (38)**

- Good example of why we need an authoritative interpreter (the Church)!
  - Many use this to emphasize Unitarian baptism...
  - But from earliest days, Church emphasized Trinitarian baptism:
    - Mt 28:19
    - Didache, VII: *"Concerning baptism, baptize thus: Having first rehearsed all these things, 'baptize, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,' in running water; but if thou hast no running water, baptize on other water, and if thou canst not in cold, then in warm, and if thou hast neither, pour water three times on the head "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."*
- So what is meant here? *Baptism of Jesus, not just Jn the B; become IN CHRIST.*

**6. "for the forgiveness of your sins" (38)**

- Again emphasizes continuity in the Gospel...but also the freedom from sin, new creation.

**7. "and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (38)**

- The fulfillment of Jn the B's prophesy: *"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit and with fire." (Mt 3:11)*
- Baptism *does* something! Not merely a symbol, but a mystery = *sacramentum!*
- Therefore, in baptism, a fulfillment of all that Jesus promised...

**8. "every one of you" (38)**

**"For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." (39)**

- All these adults, plus their entire families, plus all those Jews who are yet to hear, PLUS ALL THOSE WHOM THEY ARE YET TO CONSIDER WORTHY!
- In this we are on the edge of the great mystery of the Gospel, which leads to the motives behind most of Paul's letters and most of the problems faced by the early Church: salvation is for the WHOLE world!

**9. "And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.'" (40)**

- Peter emphasizes that salvation involves a willful choice / a response to grace / a radical turning away from and then into God's direction.

**10. "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." (41)**

- Conversion, therefore, involved:
  - "receiving his word" = accepting / believing / surrender;
  - Baptism
  - "added" into the membership in the body of Christ / the Church.

**11. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (42)**

- Not just to the "Scriptures" (=OT) nor to "private interpretation" of the oral tradition,
- But to the authoritative teaching of the 12, who had received the promised HS!
- More than evangelistic preaching, but catechetical formation of the new converts;

**12. "and [the] fellowship," (42)**

- Not merely coffee & donuts, but the profound unity of heart brought by the HS:
- Koinonia; communion; 1 John 1:3, *"That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."*

**13. "to the breaking of bread" (42)**

- Not merely going out to lunch after worship or to their homes to eat together, though they did do this, but the Eucharist;
- The Didache, IX all about the Eucharist = "the broken bread" (also, Did., XIV)
- The only reason this text has come to mean, for some, merely a shared meal, is bec. of the Reformation rejection of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

**14. "and the prayers." (42)**

- Not merely prayer meetings of extemporaneous prayers & intercessions,
- But a continuity of the Jewish daily ritual of praying the psalms PLUS the Our Father. (Didache, VIII)

**15. "And fear came upon every soul;" (43)**

- More than fear of persecution or loss of friends;
- Rather the "beginning of wisdom", the "gift of the Spirit" = fear of God!

**16. "and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." (43)**

- God worked miraculously thru the Apostles to change hearts & lives;
- Note: the Apostles were the channels of miracles; not just everyone!

**17. "And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need." (44-5)**

- Trying to live out the *Sermon on the Mount* now as the *Body of Christ*!
- Filling in the gaps from what they've left behind: new & broken relationships!

**18. "And day by day, attending the temple together" (46)**

- Therefore, in the beginning there was no assumption of a break from Judaism.
- Jesus had warned them of the impending battles (Mt 10:17f)
- But they continued faithfully together worshipping in the Temple, day by day!

**19. "and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people." (46-47)**

- but with their Jewish tradition, they added the new "Christian" fellowship.
- This witness proved favorable with "all the people."

**20. "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." (47)**

- The process continued, repeating itself, as grace cut open more hearts!

**How does this all help us make a new start for this New Year?**

- Examine your own faith & walk with Christ in the light of these early converts.