

LESSON 04

Foundations Curriculum

The Birth of the Church

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Introduction

The Birth of the Church

In this fourth lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we will speak about the birth of God's church. Before establishing the church, God had to make some important decisions. Where would Jesus be sent? In which country or nation would He be born? How would He be identified as the Son of God? Who would proclaim His message afterward? That is what we will address in this lesson.

1) The Birth of the Church

How did the coming of the Messiah take place?

Regarding the birth of the church: having decided in eternity past to send His Son into the world, God had to make several important decisions to lay the groundwork for that choice:

Where would He be sent? Which country, which nation? How would He be identified as the Son of God?

Once He came, who would be responsible for spreading His message and His truth throughout the world?

And if Jesus were sent to some idolatrous nation, who would listen to the Messiah?

Faced with these questions, God decided to create a nation that would be the cradle of the Messiah's coming.

To explain the context clearly: a nation is formed by a population and a people; it has land with borders and its own culture. God created all of this from nothing. From a single man, Abraham, God made this nation.

Later, God drew Abraham out of an idolatrous culture and kept him apart, living in tents all his life, so that he would have no contact with the counsel of the ungodly — so that he would remain undefiled.

Abraham had sons and grandsons; his families grew and multiplied, becoming a nation, a great and powerful people.

The king of Egypt, however, feared that this people would rebel against him and resolved to reduce that nation to a people in slavery.

In the face of the suffering of this enslaved people, Moses was later raised up as a deliverer. He was sent to Egypt, performed many signs and wonders, and that people was freed from the bondage of Egypt. The land had already been formed. The culture of the people began with the Ten Commandments. From that point on, all the laws God gave to the children of Israel became the communication of the counsel of God against the counsel of the ungodly.

It is worth noting that the history of this people contains few periods of faithfulness to the Lord; there are many periods of forsaking the law of God. They lived under the yoke of idolatry. Despite everything they experienced and the miracles they witnessed in the desert, they did not enter the promised land because of the unbelief and idolatry in which they lived. The people's journey lasted 40 years, and even so they did not enter the promised land. It was the following generation that fulfilled this.

The high point of this history came 1,100 years after Abraham, with David and Solomon.

The history is long, but it is worth understanding that after David and Solomon there was only decline — for about 500 years.

There was a division among the 10 northern tribes; they separated from Judah and Benjamin. From that point on, the story was a very sad one, marked by widespread abandonment of God, to the point that they were taken into captivity.

After this, the Creator sent many prophets who became God's answer to the second question: how to identify the Messiah when He comes? How do we identify Him today? Through the prophecies announced by the prophets.

The story continues:

This nation continued to be enslaved: they came under the dominion of the Persians, then the Greeks, and finally, after many years, the Roman Empire. One can imagine the mind of a Hebrew: all the curses had fallen upon them. But they wondered: where is the deliverer?

It is in this historical context — of curses that had fallen upon the nation of Israel because of sin — that Jesus comes. It is worth noting that Jesus never says "I was born," but rather "I came." He was born, certainly, but He already existed beforehand as God in eternity.

2) How the Coming of the Messiah Unfolds in the New Testament

Who is responsible for spreading the message of the Messiah throughout all the earth?

In the book of Acts, chapter 1, Jesus gives a command: do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise. This command is fulfilled at Pentecost and is witnessed by many. The text recounts the visible events that took place there, so that they might proclaim them in every corner of the earth.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them

divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

Acts 2:2–7 (NKJV)

There was a very loud sound, like a rushing mighty wind. They were touched by the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues (there was a visible manifestation of power). Those who witnessed this had two reactions: bewilderment and mockery.

At this, Peter, anointed by the Lord, stands up to explain what was happening. He immediately refutes the claim that these men were drunk.

Peter speaks first about the person of Jesus. He addresses the prophet Joel and his message about the Messiah. He announces Jesus — a real man, of flesh and blood, holy, who performed many signs, miracles, teachings, and wonders. And he emphasizes that many present had seen all of this happen.

Peter continues to clarify that the death of Jesus was not accidental but planned by God. And that God reversed the verdict against Jesus when He raised Him from the dead. Everyone was listening, and Peter continued. He told them that Jesus had been exalted and had sat down at the right hand of God the Father. And that the manifestation they had all just witnessed was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

But Peter did not soften his preaching. He ends his message by making an accusation against the people. He closes by saying: "whom you crucified."

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Acts 2:36 (NKJV)

3) The Result of Peter's Preaching

What does verse 37 of Acts 2 show us so powerfully?

Verse 37 tells us that those listeners believed everything Peter said about Jesus — and more than that: they were under conviction of sin. So much so that they asked: "What shall we do?" The work of the Holy Spirit had produced faith and conviction of sin in their hearts, and for that reason they wanted to know how they could resolve it.

At that moment, Peter points to the door of salvation!

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ

for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

Beginning at verse 42 of Acts 2, we can follow how those new converts lived, practiced the Word and the teachings they had received, and how there was fear in their hearts. The work of God there was unmistakable.

What we see next is the practical life of the church.

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (verse 42), enjoyed deep fellowship, broke bread, shared meals together, and had fear in their hearts. They saw wonders and signs through the apostles. They had all things in common, being generous in the distribution of possessions according to each person's need. They showed gladness and simplicity of heart and enjoyed the favor of all the people — and so the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:47 (NKJV)

Summary of the Church's Action

PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST
CONVICTION OF SIN → FAITH → REPENTANCE → BAPTISM IN CHRIST → GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
CONTEXT — OUTPOURING — REACTION — EXPLANATION
THE CHURCH GROWTH (NEARLY 3,000) + FELLOWSHIP + DOCTRINE + MEALS + FEAR + MIRACLES + UNITY + GENEROSITY + JOY + PURITY + PRAISE + AN ATTRACTIVE ATMOSPHERE

Peter reaches the height of his preaching with the proclamation of Christ. The message produces in those lives:

⇒ Conviction of sin ⇒ Faith ⇒ Repentance ⇒ Baptism in Christ ⇒ Each one also receives the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Stepping back from the historical overview (from the beginning of creation) and entering Acts 2: all of this is the Church! This is where she is born.

CONCLUSION

In this fourth lesson we learned about the birth of the church, which begins with the creation of a nation that would serve as the cradle of the Messiah's coming. We walked through the historical and cultural context of the time, the raising up of a first deliverer, Moses, and all the struggle and bondage the people endured. In the midst of so much suffering, they wondered where the Messiah was. We also spoke about how Jesus would be identified as this deliverer — through the prophecies announced by the prophets in the Old Testament — and finally arrived at Acts 2, when Jesus gives a command to the apostles and they begin to proclaim His message. In this context, the question of who would be responsible for spreading the message of the Messiah throughout

all the earth is answered. The simple answer is: the church, those converted and reached by Jesus. All of this is and forms part of the history of the Church!

CONSIDER CAREFULLY

In answering and reflecting on these questions, you will be able to better understand the church, how it functions, and your own role within it.

- 01** Do I know the history of Israel and how Jesus fits into it?
- 02** Do I believe everything Peter said about Jesus?
- 03** Do I have a contrite heart (one of repentance) toward my sins, like those presented in Acts?

*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*

Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)

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