



May 23, 2010

Grand Opening

We all love a Grand Opening Celebration when new stores open. Everything is bright and shiny, there are no stains on the floors, restrooms are clean and smell fresh. There are free gifts, door prizes, samples and sometimes entertainment. We love that. Its fun. Later, as a facility ages and shows some wear, the shiny rubs off. Employees settle into day to day operations and things become commonplace, not like they were during the opening when things were uncertain, exciting and new. When a chain announces a celebration of this sort marking a new store's availability or their anniversary, we want to go to the new place. The old place is too familiar. We want to experience new and shiny once more. The same is true of almost anything else. From Marriage to getting a new job there is a "honeymoon" period where we enjoy what is new and try to figure out how things are going to work. Folks today don't think of the beginning of the church in the same way. On the day of Pentecost the church came with power. Christ stated that he would build his church and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it (**Matt 16.18**). Jesus told his disciples he would send them a comforter who would guide them into all truth and show them things to come (**John 16.12-13**). Prior to his ascension, Christ charged the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were "*endued with power from on high*" (**Lk 24.49**). This happened on the day of Pentecost (**Acts 2**). On that day the Holy Spirit fell on them. There was the sound as of a rushing might wind and cloven tongues like fire appeared over their heads. They spoke in tongues, not gibberish, but the foreign languages of the Jews that had gathered from the far reaches of the Roman empire. Peter revealed that what was happening was prophesied by the prophet Joel (**Acts 2.16**) and preached the remission of sins in the name of Jesus for the first time. It was the Grand Opening of the church. Something that had never existed before. It was bright and shiny and the people, at least 3,000 of them on that day, were impressed enough that they listened to what was being spoken and obeyed. In the beginning the newness of the experience continued. The shiny stayed in the minds of the people around the new Christians and for a time they were pleased with what was going on (**Acts 2.47**). But as the church settled into the business of preaching and teaching. The shiny wore off. Persecutions arose resulting in the death of Stephen (**Acts 7**) and a general persecution started as a result (**Acts 8**). The effects of the Grand Opening of the church did not wear off for those who knew the truth and committed themselves to it. They grew stronger. Persecution caused the word to spread (**Acts 8.4**). As time went by other things began to change. Inspired writers preserved the message (**Jude 3**). God completed the work of revealing all that he wanted us to know (**2 Pet 1.3**) and when that was completed, the Helper promised by Christ, went home (**1 Cor 13.9-10, 2 Thess 2.7**). The shiny passed from the more dramatic demonstrations of miracles, tongues and other things, to the embodiment of power in the written word (**Rom 1.16**). Today folks look for what shines but want to find something dramatic and exciting. Well, the scriptures are exciting and dramatic but demonstrate it in a different way. I believe this is why some religious organizations resort to entertainment programs and other things to excite and stir the emotions. Having the spirit, or having spirited services, to many means feeling emotionally charged and excited. Truly spirited services follow the examples and commands found in the New Testament. The scriptures talk to us about comfort, joy, contentment and living a quiet life (**1 Tim 2.2**). The Lord's church settled into the business of what it was about. Today the search for something new and exciting reflects the fact that we have not desired nor explored the depths of God through his word In the heart of a Christian, every day is a Grand Opening and every gathering of the saints a celebration.

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