

The Birth of the Church Acts 2

Introduction

Jesus promised the Helper and a few days later that promise was **fulfilled**. During the few days between, the apostles stayed close together and prayed. But the pouring out of the Holy Spirit changed their lives in a big way. It actually changed their world!

Many Jews were in Jerusalem at this time for the Feast of Pentecost. They witnessed the Holy Spirit poured out on the apostles with their own eyes and ears. When Peter preached a convincing and convicting sermon, through the power of the Holy Spirit, thousands of the Jews recognized that Jesus Christ, recently crucified, was their Messiah. They repented of their sin and the church was born. How exciting this will be to study! These are our Christian roots. Imagine what it would have been like to be there in person.

Overview Outline of Acts 2

- I. The Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:1-13
- II. Peter's Sermon - Acts 2:14-36
- III. The People's Response - Acts 2:37-47

I. The Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:1-13

Pentecost is a Jewish Feast known by many different names: Feast of Weeks, Feast of Harvest, Day of First Fruits. It is described in Leviticus 23:15-22 and Deuteronomy 16:9-12 as the Feast of the Weeks. It came to be known as "Pentecost" (the Greek word for fiftieth) because it celebrates the 50 days of harvest that followed the barley sheaf offering at the Passover. It was one of the three great pilgrim festivals of Judaism. For Christians, it celebrates the beginning of the church.

On the Day of Pentecost, all the apostles and probably most of the 120 mentioned in Acts 1:5, were gathered together. Suddenly and without warning, three simultaneous and

miraculous incidents occurred: 1) *a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind*, 2) *divided tongues, as of fire*, 3) *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit*.

Luke does not say that the sound was a wind but like a wind. Actually, the Greek word "pneuma" can mean either "wind" or "spirit." The sound came from heaven and it filled the entire room. Again, Luke does not say that the tongues were fire but that they were like fire. One of these tongues sat upon each person assembled in the room. In the Old Testament, fire portrayed the presence of God (see Genesis 15:17; Exodus 3:2-6; 13:21-22; 19:18; 40:38).

Both the wind and the fire were manifestations of the power of God in their midst. We can be sure that the apostles were paying attention! Then, the Holy Spirit filled those present just as Jesus had foretold in Acts 1:5. In his speech in Acts 11:15-16, Peter looked back and recognized this as the baptism of the Spirit. The first effect of the pouring out of the Spirit was that those assembled began to speak in other tongues.

Because it was Pentecost, Luke writes that there were Jews from *every nation under heaven* present. When they heard the sound (perhaps the sound of the rushing wind, or the apostles speaking with other tongues, or, both) the Jews gathered together to discuss what was happening.

Jews from 15 different nations heard the apostles praise the wondrous works of God, each in their own language or dialect. This was amazing to them because the apostles were from Galilee, a northern area of Israel which was far from the city of Jerusalem. Galileans spoke with a strange accent, very different

from the Jews of Jerusalem. How could it be that these unsophisticated men could speak so proficiently in languages which they did not know? The crowd of people asked each other, *Whatever could this mean?* Could they be drunk, *full of new wine?*

II. Peter's Sermon - Acts 2:14-36

Peter had always been **impulsive**, speaking out of turn, putting his foot in his mouth, or saying things he regretted later. But now he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he stood and spoke to the Jews with power, wisdom, and grace. He explained what was taking place. He showed that the speaking in tongues was the fulfillment of Scripture and the fruit of Christ's resurrection and ascension.

Peter's first focus was to show that the apostles were not drunk. First of all, it was only *the third hour of the day* (9:00 a.m.). On a feast day, it was customary to fast until after the morning prayer service which would have been around 10:00 a.m. So, it would be very unlikely for them to be drunk.

Peter quoted from the prophet Joel because this passage was "the clearest and most obvious Old Testament prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (Acts, James Montgomery Boice). The miraculous speaking in tongues is what Joel had prophesied. Joel described what would take place in the last days. According to Hebrews 1:1-2, the Christians of the early church believed that they were living in the last days. The last days were understood by the Jews to begin with the coming of the Messiah. Later in his sermon, Peter will declare Jesus as the Messiah. Peter used Joel's prophecy to show that judgement was coming. The aim of Peter's sermon was for his listeners to repent and call on the name of the Lord for salvation.

Peter ended his sermon by preaching that the Spirit was poured out because the Messiah had come. In the past, God's Spirit had worked powerfully through certain individuals like Moses, David, Isaiah, etc., for specific tasks. Now it was poured out upon all God's people.

He gave evidence to show that Jesus was truly the Messiah. He started with the biggest proof of all...God Himself. Peter showed that Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension were all **foreknown** by God and were part of His eternal plan. God had shown Jesus to be the Messiah by working *miracles, wonders, and signs* through Him. In fact, many in Peter's audience had seen Jesus' miraculous deeds.

It is very important to remember that when Christ was put to death, it was not a surprise to God. It was not an accident. It fulfilled His perfect will as part of His plan of redemption. The Jews were held responsible for crucifying Christ. They were the ones who had handed Him over to the Gentiles. So, this was God's plan, and the Jews bore the guilt of their own actions.

God had shown David that the Christ would be his offspring. God promised to raise Him up to sit upon David's throne (See Psalm 132:11). That is why David could prophesy and Peter could confidently preach that *His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption* (2:31). The twelve apostles (Peter and those standing with him) were witnesses that Christ had risen from the dead.

Peter showed that Christ's **exaltation** was also prophesied in the Scriptures. He quoted from Psalm 110:1 in which David wrote of *The Lord*, referring to God, speaking to *my Lord*, referring to Jesus, and inviting Him to sit at His right hand. Jesus is on the throne at the right hand of God right now. He has been exalted by God to reign as both Lord and Christ. Peter **emphasized** that Jesus is the Messiah! He also reminded the audience that Jesus is the Man whom they had crucified.

How would you have felt if you had been one of the Jews hearing Peter's sermon that day? Would you have been mad at a 'nobody' from Galilee, who was interpreting the Holy Scriptures but hadn't gone to school to study them! Would you be thinking, "How dare he

accuse me of killing my Messiah?" Or, would your heart have broken as you realized what you had done? Do you understand that it was your own sin which sent Jesus to the cross and your own hands which put Him to death? How will YOU respond to Peter's sermon? Will you recognize Jesus as your own Lord and Savior and submit your heart and soul to Him right now?

III. The People's Response - Acts 2:37-47

Those who listened to Peter's sermon that day were convinced he spoke the truth. Their consciences were **convicted**. They hung their heads in shame as they realized they had put to death their Messiah. Turning to the apostles, they asked for help. What could they do to be delivered from their sin and guilt?

Peter then told the people what we will hear again and again in the book of Acts..."Repent and be baptized." This is the message of the gospel. But what exactly does the word 'repent' mean? It is much more than an apology. In fact, an apology is actually an excuse to allow for your behavior. But repentance understands there is no excuse anywhere under Heaven that can save you. Repentance is a reversal. It is a complete change of mind. Imagine you are walking in one direction, and you stop, turn in the opposite direction, and walk the opposite way...God's way. And with your change in direction, your heart and mind change also. Have you done this? Have you repented? What brings you pleasure? Are those things the same things that bring God pleasure?

Repentance results in two things: 1) the forgiveness of sins, and 2) the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter told his listeners that this promise was for them, for their children, and even for those who were far away from God (probably referring to the Gentiles). That means this promise is also for you. Please note that Peter said the promise is for all who are called by God. God is the one who does the calling. His goodness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4).

Three thousand people were saved that day. This was the beginning of the Christian church. All who accepted Peter's words were baptized in the name of Jesus. The new believers received instruction from the apostles on correct doctrine. They shared fellowship together by *breaking bread*, probably a meal like our modern day potluck, followed by a celebration of the Lord's Supper. They also fellowshiped in prayer. God blessed the new body of believers by doing *many wonders and signs* (2:43) through the apostles as proof of their ministry (Hebrews 2:3-4).

The people continued to worship daily in the temple as had been their custom, for they were still good Jews. They were what is known today as 'completed Jews,' meaning they had surrendered their lives to the Messiah, Jesus. †

Prayer

Ask God to help you be bold when you speak about Him to others.

Memory Verse

Acts 2:21 and Joel 2:32a — *And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Vocabulary

fulfilled - accomplished or satisfied

impulsive - acting suddenly to do something, perhaps without thinking the actions through

foreknown - God's knowledge of all things past, present, and future

exaltation - After Jesus' ascension, he was raised to the position of power and is to be praised forever, sitting at the right hand of God.

emphasized - to give special importance to something

convicted - proven and found guilty

QUESTIONS FOR ACTS LESSON 3

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. What arguments did Peter use to prove that Jesus was the Messiah? _____

2. Write in your own words what it means to repent. _____

DAY TWO: Read Acts 3:1-26.

3. a. What did the lame man want from Peter and John? _____

b. What did Peter tell him and what did Peter do? _____

c. What did the lame man do? _____

4. Underline the correct statements.

The people were filled with wonder and amazement. The people ran to Peter and John.

Peter asked the people why they marveled. Peter proclaimed his own power in healing the man.

Peter gave glory to God. Peter took the opportunity to preach a sermon.

5. a. Name 4 things the people of Israel had done.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

b. Name 2 things God had done for Jesus in spite of what the people had done.

1. _____

2. _____

c. What did Peter tell the people they needed to do? _____

6. a. What had given the lame man strength to walk? Give verse.

b. ♥(Heart Question) What would you like Jesus to give you strength to do?

DAY THREE: Read Acts 4:1-12.

7. Who arrested Peter and John? Why?

8. What happened in spite of the fact that the apostles were arrested?

9. a. Who did Peter have the opportunity to speak to the next day? Circle the correct answers.

rulers elders scribes Annas, the high priest, and his family Julius Caesar

b. What question was Peter asked? _____

c. What gave Peter the power and boldness to speak? What was his answer? _____

10. What two things do you learn about Jesus in verses 11 and 12?

DAY FOUR: Read Acts 4:13-22.

11. What was the council's reaction after hearing Peter's speech? _____

12. What did they command Peter and John NOT to do? Why? _____

13. How did Peter and John answer? _____

14. Why was the council unable to punish Peter and John? _____

DAY FIVE: Read Acts 4:23-31.

15. What did Peter and John do as soon as they were released? _____

16. What did the whole group do “with one accord”? _____

17. a. What did they pray for? _____

b. How did they know that God had answered their prayer? _____

c. ♥ (Heart Question) Can you share about something you have prayed for and have seen God answer in a very special way? _____

18. Reviewing what you have read in Acts 3 and 4 this week, list the verses that mention “*the name of Jesus*.” What do you learn about the name of Jesus from these verses?
