

A Study of the Acts of the Apostles

Week Two

Acts 2:1-32

Day One

2:1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

v. 1 – Pentecost occurred 50 days after the Passover celebration. It was one of the major feast of the Jews and all men were required to be in Jerusalem for the event. It is significant that the first church was together during that time, for just as the Jews received the Law after the first Passover in Egypt, so the Church received the “new law” right after Jesus, the Passover Lamb, was sacrificed. **What is this “new law”?**

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

God's laws are no longer written on tablets of stone, but rather of the heart.

v. 2 – There was no actual wind, but rather the sound of the wind. Jesus had alluded to the resemblance of the wind and the Spirit when He said:

“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

This symbolized the sovereign nature of the Spirit's ways, which cannot be controlled or manipulated by people. I lived through one hurricane and a few near misses, and I know that strong wind can do a lot of damage and is a fearful thing. The Spirit can have the same effect for those who aren't prepared for His coming; He will blow out all kinds of junk and undo the agendas of those who try to use or control God for their own purposes.

v. 3 – Now the Spirit appeared in the form of fire. So the Spirit was represented by two potentially destructive and uncontrollable forces: wind and fire. I hear people refer to and welcome the Spirit's “fire” in song and prayer. But fire hurts! It also destroys, and the Spirit's presence isn't something we can control. Fire, however, can be harnessed and used for good things, but only if the user respects its properties. That is same with the Spirit.

v. 4 – It is of note that the Spirit appeared as tongues of fire and then the disciples spoke in other tongues. That is because the Spirit came to empower the witness of the Church and that witness was primarily through preaching Jesus and Him crucified. I believe our actions should witness, but actions without proclamation of the gospel message is incomplete. **How is your spoken witness? Is it full of Holy Ghost fire? Is the Spirit enabling you to speak of God’s glories? If not, what are the impediments in your life?**

Day Two

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs — we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

v. 5 – I have told many audiences that God is a great organizer. He arranged to have Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem at the right time and now He had men from every nation in Pentecost for the outpouring of the Spirit. **Can you trust God to organize your life? Can you believe He is working, even when you can’t see it?** Here was a Pentecost that everyone probably assumed would be like any other Pentecost, but it wasn’t. This Pentecost changed the world. And that is why we need faith. You may think tomorrow, next Sunday or this year will be like all the others. But who knows? God may do something spectacular and change your life and the lives of those around you. So have faith! Trust God! Be faithful!

v. 6 – The Spirit also knows how to draw a crowd. The people heard the sound of a violent wind, but nothing was blowing. So they assembled to check it out. When I promoted worship concerts, I found out that no matter how effective we were at advertising, it was still the Spirit who had to draw the people and build the crowd. **Are you working hard to make something happen in your life or ministry?** Maybe you need to relax today and allow the Lord to do it His way. And if He “doesn’t do it,” then maybe it’s because He wants to do something else that you just don’t understand.

This phenomenon of speaking in tongues so that others could understand was never duplicated that we know of in the early church—it was a unique happening. But tongues seemed to be a regular part of the believer’s life. Paul instructed the early church about how to utilize tongues, and then made this statement:

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue (1 Corinthians 14:18-19).

If Paul needed tongues, then I think I do as well. But you must make up your own mind as to whether tongues were only for the early church, only for certain people today, or if it is a gift that is available to every believer today. **What do you believe where speaking in tongues is concerned?**

v. 7 – Those who heard this were utterly amazed. They knew that those speaking weren't even from Jerusalem, the metropolitan capital city. They were rural Galileans, who were speaking the languages of the nations. The Holy Spirit enables the Church to speak everyone's language, because the Spirit wants to exalt Jesus, not the Church. The Church should also be concerned to publish the gospel to as many nations and people groups as possible. **What are you doing, or what is your church doing, to declare the gospel to other groups?**

vs. 8-11 – The Spirit knows how to efficiently spread the Word. Here Luke listed some of the places where the listeners were from. In one moment, Jews heard the glories of God declared in their own language in one place from a small group of believers.

By the way, I had a seminary professor who theorized that this all took place in the Temple. He argued that this could not have happened in a remote area or at a normal home, for how could all these men numbering in the thousands from all these nations have assembled in a residential area. That makes sense to me, but Luke doesn't seem to think it important as to where it happened, just that it happened.

The Spirit moved in such a way that the listeners were asking the questions, trying to find out more about God. **Are you asking people questions about God or are people asking you the questions?** That makes a big difference where effective evangelism is concerned.

Day Three

12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." 14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

v. 12 – The Spirit broke into the consciousness of each listener and here again they asked a question: **What does this mean?** The Church today needs to position itself to be close to nonbelievers, to allow the Spirit to use the Church to attract the attention of others, and then to be accessible enough for people to ask questions. The problem today is that the Church is being asked questions, but questions pertaining to why it is so bizarre and ineffective. I have found that many people are open to God, but closed to the Church. Yet without the Church, they cannot learn about God. **Do you agree or disagree?**

The listeners were amazed but that cannot be all that they are if they are to come to know Jesus. They must also be perplexed, challenged in their way of thinking and concerning their lifestyle.

v. 13 – There are always some who will scoff and dismiss the acts of the Spirit, as some did in this case, accusing the disciples of drunkenness. Don't ever be deterred by your critics. Press on with the strategy that God has given you.

v. 14 – Peter seized this moment, just as he had earlier to appoint Judas' replacement. He stood up and told the audience that he would explain what was happening. Peter identified with the audience—"My fellow Jews"—and exhorted them to listen carefully. He was authoritative and direct, with no apologies. This wasn't a seeker sensitive situation—this was a Holy Spirit situation. It is so important that we not try to make things happen, but are careful to explain what is happening. Jesus knows how to build His church; we just need to cooperate with what He's doing.

v. 15 – Peter answered the critics by refuting their claim that the men were drunk. It was only nine in the morning! But he proceeded to explain what was happening. I think here of what Peter wrote:

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander (1 Peter 3:15-17).

How well do you match up to Peter's instruction? Have you set Jesus apart as Lord? Are you prepared? Is anyone asking you anything? Do you have hope? Are you gentle and respectful to your questioners? Do you have a clear conscience? Is someone speaking against you? The latter is very important—if no one is speaking against you, then you must ask yourself why not. For Paul wrote:

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12).

Day Four

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

v. 16 – The disciples were labeled as “unschooled” by the leaders of their day. This simply meant that they had no theological training; this didn’t mean that they couldn’t read or write. They were intelligent men, who were now empowered by the Spirit to witness and work. Those listening had asked what all this meant and now Peter was going to tell them.

vs. 17&18 - Peter immediately went to the book of Joel and explained to the crowd that this outpouring of the Spirit had been predicted in their book of Joel.

However, don’t think for a minute that there is any substitute for study and familiarity with your message content. Peter had obviously studied and read Joel. I have often said that God cannot get out of you what someone else didn’t put in you. God will empower what you have, but you still must have it in the first place.

That is why reading and learning are so important if God is going to use you. **So what are you reading?** It has been said, “Leaders are readers.” **What is your reading plan?** My goal is to listen to or read six books every month. In the last four years, I have finished 325 books on a variety of topics—history, science, missions, theology, leadership and management. I know that because I keep a list of every title and author.

I have said to many audiences that if you are ignorant and the Spirit anoints you, you then have anointed ignorance. You cannot rely simply on your anointing or your learning; it must be a partnership between the two.

vs. 19-21 – Peter completes the quote probably from memory under the direction of the Holy Spirit. But I would imagine Peter first spent some time memorizing so that the Spirit could use him at this point. Scripture memorization is a lost art and discipline. I have memorized some verses simply because I have preached them so often. **But I don’t spend any time memorizing Scripture; do you?** One of the problems is that modern translations make the Word so easy to understand that it is harder to memorize. The King James version was easier to commit to memory because it uses phrases and words that are unusual, making them easier to remember.

So if you are going to work to memorize more Scripture, it may help to use an older translation of the Bible. Just a thought.

Just a word about the language from Joel: This is what’s known as apocryphal language. A bloody moon, fire and smoke are not to be taken literally. They are an ancient way of describing a cataclysmic event in history, which the outpouring of the Spirit surely was. At any rate, what is to be taken literally is that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh.

Are you fully utilizing the Spirit’s presence in your life? Are you taking advantage of the Spirit’s availability to all those with whom you come in contact? This is a great day to serve the Lord! We have the power of the Spirit; we aren’t alone in our work. May God grant you great wisdom and boldness in how to use this spiritual power.

May it not be for selfish means, but used to spread the gospel and equip the saints all over the world. Amen.

Day Five

22 "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

v. 22 – What a great word: accredited. The Father endorsed Jesus by working signs and wonders through Him. Jesus was “endorsed” not by what He preached or taught, but by what He did to bless and help others. You will be proved and accredited by doing the same. I don’t think that you are restricted to the kind of miracles that Jesus did, which is why most people don’t even try to perform miracles.

What is the greatest miracle that Jesus performed? Perhaps it was raising Lazarus from the dead. **How can you top that?** But think of it from a different perspective. Jesus never built a hospital, opened an orphanage, wrote a book, incorporated and maintained a business, established a mission in Africa or started a business. **Could those be the greater works in John 14:12?** I think they are. **So what can you do to allow God to prove His presence and favor are with you? What miracles can you perform that are consistent with who God made you to be?**

v. 23 – Well, so much for winning friends and influencing people! Peter told it like it was without mincing words. God’s purpose was fulfilled in Jesus’ death, but the listeners did it with the help of wicked men—probably referring to the Romans. Peter said what many are hesitant to say today: The Jews killed Jesus! Yet it was God’s plan for Jesus to be sacrificed for the sins of many, yet it wasn’t God’s intention for Him to be treated so badly by so many. That was sinful mankind’s contribution to the sacrificial drama.

v. 24 – Peter then bore witness to what the audience had only heard about—that Jesus was alive. Jesus had appeared to His disciples and not to all of Jerusalem. He then instructed His followers to tell everyone what they knew to be true. We are to do the same thing today. Peter could speak the truth to the Jews without being angry at them about the way Jesus had been treated. I don’t always sense that the Church is free from anger today. We rail against homosexuals, other sinners and the moral decline of our society. And often those who are preaching against sin sound so angry. Or there is another branch of the Church that isn’t upset by much at all. That branch sidesteps the issues of sin and God’s righteous requirements. **What is the answer?**

The answer is to preach Jesus, who was crucified and raised from the dead. Peter put the entire focus on Jesus, His life, death and resurrection. That is our message. What are you

doing in your life to help others focus on Jesus? We as individuals and the Church need to follow Paul's pattern:

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power (1 Corinthians 2:2-5).

It's not about political influence or social action, it's all about Jesus! I came to the realization a few years ago that I had preached entire sermons about various topics and never related them back to Jesus! How sad! How pitiful! Now I am attempting to be more "unbalanced" in my approach to public ministry. I want the people to see Jesus, to leave my presence feeling like they have touched Him, not me.

Day Six

25 David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, 27 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

v. 25 – Peter then validated Jesus through a reference to the Old Testament and the prophet David. Peter referred to Psalm 16, which is a remarkable prophecy concerning Jesus, delivered 1,100 years before Jesus' was born! You can put your trust in God's word as true, just as Peter and the apostles did. They quoted Scripture with full confidence that it was perfect and from God.

If you read Psalm 16 in your Bible, it may not appear exactly as Peter quoted it here. That's because Peter was quoting from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, known as the Septuagint. What you are reading is Hebrew translated into Greek translated into English. More impressive to me was that Peter was probably quoting from memory when he preached this sermon.

vs. 26-28 – While David wrote these words, they are the words and thoughts of Jesus. These were words of faith and hope that God would not allow Jesus' body to decay, referring to the resurrection. Jesus was certainly aware of this Psalm and perhaps quoted it to Himself as He prepared to die. Jesus had faith in God the Father. Jesus doesn't ask us to do anything He didn't do Himself. What's more, He showed us how to do what He did—He did it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Are you going through a hard time? So did Jesus. **Are you having to put your trust completely and totally in God?** So did Jesus. **Is God not delivering you *from* your trials but helping you *through* them?** That's what He did for Jesus. You can now understand what Jesus meant when He said:

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?" (Luke 9:23-26).

Thank you, Jesus, that you went before me and showed the way. Help me do, Lord, what you did: Trust God completely and totally with all your being. I want to be like You. Amen.

Day Seven

29 "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

v. 29 – Peter pointed out the obvious—that David wasn't talking about himself, but rather prophesied about Jesus. Every leader up to Jesus had served their time and died. Now Jesus served His time, died, but then came back to life. That set Jesus apart from everyone else. That is why He is worthy of all glory and honor.

v. 30 – I had never thought of David as a prophet before I read this verse; a songwriter, leader and king, but not a prophet. But David knew that God had promised him an heir on the throne, and based on that promise, he wrote Psalm 16, predicting Jesus' resurrection. **What has God promised you? Do you speak confidently about it? Prophecy or teach others based on its coming reality and fulfillment?**

v. 31 – David saw what was ahead. **Do you operated out of a present future, or a present only? Does the future affect your present, instilling hope, or do you have a lonely present that is void of God moving on your behalf in the future?** What you believe about the future impacts what you do and say today. **Is your future a part of your present preparation?**

v. 32 – Peter related what had happened to the Old Testament. He identified with his audience and gave them something to identify with as well. They were Jews and he spoke to them as Jews. It is critical when you speak or minister that you give your audience something that they can understand. You must be on their level, so to speak. Yet you must also speak about what you know, not just what others have said is true. God has never allowed me to teach or write theory. He has forced me to tell my stories of what I know to be true as He has taught me.

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what God has done in your life to bless and teach others. It's the principle of God making the Word flesh in you and you identifying with it and sharing it with others. Amen.