

Lesson 2 (Acts 2:1-41)

"Men of Israel, Hear These Words"

"And while staying with them [Jesus] ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4-5). What was this baptism? "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). What was this power? How could these ordinary men who had made so many mistakes and struggled with so many misconceptions possibly answer Jesus' call? Acts 2 provides answers by documenting the fulfillment of the Father's promise to send the Holy Spirit.

Faith Comes From Hearing

Acts 2 is a living exhibit of the principles listed in Romans 10:14-17.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Multitudes of men and women were in desperate need of God's grace, but how would they call on the Giver of grace if they had not yet been convicted in their hearts? How were they to be convicted in their hearts if they had not yet realized the fullness of God's plan to save them? How would they come to a realization of God's amazing grace without someone who was willing to share the news? And in what way were Peter, Andrew, James, John and the rest qualified or capable to begin sharing this most wonderful news?

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God ... For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom,

it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. (1 Cor 1:18, 21)

"When the day of Pentecost arrived"(Acts 2:1). "Pentecost" is a transliteration of a Greek word, meaning "fiftieth." It referred to the fiftieth day after the Passover festival when the Jews celebrated the Feast of Weeks-the annual harvest festival (Lev 23:15-21; Deut 16:9-12). This was the second of three festivals (the others being Passover and Tabernacles) that all Jewish males were required to attend in Jerusalem (Deut 16:16). Pentecost fell in early Summer after the conclusion of the grain harvest. It was a joyous occasion when the Israelites could express their thanks to God for his provisions throughout the year and renew their commitment to him. It was also an extremely opportune time for the good news about Jesus' resurrection to be proclaimed since such a large crowd would have already been assembled in Jerusalem.

Take a moment to carefully read Acts 2:1-3 and reflect on the fact that wind and fire had been used by God in the past.

- In Ezekiel's vision of the valley filled with dry bones, the life-giving breath of God comes as a wind and makes the dead bodies live again (Ezek 37:1-14). Jesus himself described the coming Holy Spirit as a wind John 3:8).
- During the Exodus, God frequently appeared as fire. When the LORD first revealed himself to Moses, it was out of the midst of a burning bush (Exo 3:1-6). The Israelites were led by a pillar of fire by night during their wilderness journey (Exo 13:20-22). The LORD descended on Mount Sinai in fire to give the law to Moses (Exo 19:18).

What then should we make of this "sound like a mighty rushing wind" and these "divided tongues as of fire" that appear in Acts 2:1-3? What is going on?

A great deal of confusion exists in today's religious world on the topic of "speaking in tongues." After carefully reading Acts 2:1-13, what did it mean to "speak in other tongues" on this occasion? Most importantly, how were these ordinary Galileans (2:7) able to do such an incredible thing?

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them ... (Acts 1:14)

Reversing his previous public denial of Jesus, Peter now stands up in front of this large crowd and boldly declares that Jesus is in fact the long-awaited Messiah of Israel and has been verified as sovereign Lord by his resurrection from the dead. Out of the twelve, why Peter? Go back and read Matthew 16:13-20, paying special attention to the promise of Jesus in Matthew 16:19. What were these "keys of the kingdom of heaven"? Are we watching the fulfillment of that promise unfold in Acts 2? If so, in what way?

Take your time with Peter's address in Acts 2:14-36. He cites three passages from the old Testament. Open your Bible to these ancient texts and carefully read each of them. What did the Holy Spirit expect the original audience (as well as the modern reader) to take away from the quoting and application of these prophecies?

Joel 2:28-32 (quoted in Acts 2:16-21)

Psalms 16:8-11 (quoted in Acts 2:25-28)

Psalms 110:1 (quoted in Acts 2:34-35)

points will be consistently made by the apostles when addressing a Jewish audience:

- 1) An affirmation that the time of the fulfillment of old Testament prophecy had come
- 2) A rehearsal of the teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus
- 3) An appeal to old Testament prophecies whose fulfillment in these events are evidence that Jesus is the Messiah
- 4) An assertion that God's definite plan and foreknowledge have been involved all along.
- 5) A call to respond accordingly.

When you hear Peter affirm that Jesus of Nazareth had been "attested" with "mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him" in the midst of so many people (2:22), what works and wonders and signs come to your mind?

Peter's statement in Acts 2:23 is of supreme importance. "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God ... " Why is it of supreme importance?

The bottom line of Peter's entire message is contained in Acts 2:36. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." In your own words, what are the great implications contained in the fact that God has made Jesus:

- Lord?
- Christ?

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

In your own words, what does it mean to be "cut to the heart"?

What do we learn about these people by the question they ask?

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (Acts 2:38-39)

What does it mean to repent? You might find Acts 3:19, Acts 26:18-20, and 2 Corinthians 7:8-11 helpful.

What does it mean to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of my sins? You might find Acts 8:38, Acts 10:47, Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12-13, and 1 Peter 3:21 helpful.

"The gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38 could be read as either "a gift from the Holy Spirit (a gift which he gives) or "a gift which consists of the Holy Spirit." Since the original language is somewhat ambiguous, we are left with the task of discerning which of the two best fits what God has communicated in other passages that might shed some helpful light. Consider John 7:37-39, Acts 5:29-32, Romans 8:1-27, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Galatians 3:2, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 3:14-19, and 1 John 4:12-13. Based on those passages, what seems to be the best interpretation of Acts 2:38?

And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:40-41)

In what way could these people possibly "save themselves"? What does Peter mean by that phrase?

And what about "this crooked generation"? What does that mean?

Overall, what do we learn from Acts 2? How does this chapter serve as a foundation of our faith and our mission as modern disciples of Jesus?

A-C-T-S made personal
Based on my study of Acts 2;1-41

A - doration: God is worthy of my praise because...

C - aution: this section of Scripture reminded me to evaluate ...

T - rust: my faith in my Savior has grown because ...

S - trength: I was particularly helped and encouraged by ...