



• 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.

As Acts 2 begins, multitudes of men and women were in desperate need of forgiveness, 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 serious extent of their guilt? How would they find hope for their guilt in God’s amazing grace without someone who was willing to share the good news? And in what way were Peter, Andrew, James, John and the rest qualified or capable to even 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 Passover when Jews would celebrate the Feast of Harvest (Exo 23:16)—also known as the Feast of Weeks (Lev 23:15-21; Deut 16:9-12)—commemorating the firstfruits of the Spring harvest. “Three times a year” (Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Booths), all Jewish males had been commanded to “appear before the LORD” (Deut 16:16). Pentecost was a joyous occasion when the descendants of Abraham could express their thanksgiving 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 of Jesus’ resurrection to be proclaimed since an enormous crowd would have been in Jerusalem to “appear before the LORD.”

- ⇒ Take a moment to reflect on the fact that **wind** (Ezek 37:1-14) and **fire** (Exo 3:1-6; 13:20-22; 19:18) had been used by God to make powerful points in the past. 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?
- ⇒ There is much confusion on the topic of “speaking in tongues.” After carefully reading Acts 2:1-11, what were these men doing as they spoke “in other tongues”? 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...” (Acts 1:14). Vehemently denying even knowing Jesus just weeks before, Peter now stands up in front of this enormous crowd and boldly declares that Jesus is in fact the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. Out of the twelve, why Peter? Go back and read Matthew 16:13-20. 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 Peter's 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)

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

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



Notice the general outline of Peter's sermon. The same major points will be consistently made to Jewish audiences throughout the book of Acts:

- 1) An affirmation that Old Testament prophecy is being fulfilled
- 2) A rehearsal of Jesus' teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection
- 3) An examination of Old Testament prophecy as evidence that Jesus is in fact the long-awaited Messiah
- 4) An assertion that this has been a part of God's plan all along
- 5) A call to submissively respond to God's offer of grace

⇒ 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?

⇒ "This Jesus, delivered up according to **the definite plan and fore-knowledge of God...**" (Acts 2:23) Why is this phrase in Peter's address of supreme importance?

⇒ The climax of Peter's 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." What are the profound implications of God making Jesus:

◆ Lord?

◆ Christ?

⇒ In what way were these people "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37)?

⇒ What does the question in Acts 2:37 indicate about the people's state of mind in relation to Jesus and Peter's words about him?

⇒ In everyday terms, what does it mean to **repent**? Consider the input of Acts 3:19, Acts 26:16-20, and 2 Corinthians 7:8-11.

⇒ What does it mean to be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? How do Acts 8:38, Acts 10:47, Romans 6:1-4, Colossians 2:11-14, Titus 3:3-7, and 1 Peter 3:18-22 enhance our understanding?



"The gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38 could be read as "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 best harmonizes with what God has communicated in other passages. Careful study of John 7:37-39, Acts 5:29-32, Romans 8:1-27, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Galatians 3:1-2, Galatians 5:16-25, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 3:14-19, and 1 John 4:12-13 could be very helpful.

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 does Peter mean by “this crooked generation”?

- ⇒ **THOUGHT QUESTION:** Overall, what do we learn from Acts 2? How does this chapter serve as a foundation of our faith and 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...

