

Exploring Acts

The Continuing Ministry of Jesus Christ Through the Holy Spirit

Lesson 2

Day One: Poured Out On the Church

At the end of Acts 1, the Lord's followers were obediently gathered together for a time of silence and prayer. Jesus had commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father: "You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5). It had been fifty days since His resurrection. Forty of those days were filled with appearances of Jesus to His followers. But now the time of waiting had come to an end.

Pentecost, the *Festival of Weeks*, was a feast celebrated fifty days following Passover commemorating the first fruits of the harvest (Num. 28:26). Jewish tradition taught that Pentecost observed the day when the Law was given to the nation of Israel. The Jews lovingly referred to it as "Joy of the Law." What began in that upper room as the Old Testament commemoration of Pentecost became a new celebration of the Church receiving the fullness of God's Spirit.

Read Acts 2:1–47.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer. Come to your time of study expectant to receive something from the Lord. The focus of day one will be vv. 1–13.

Note your findings in vv. 1–4:

- The setting for the Spirit's manifestation: _____
- What the believers heard: _____
- What the believers saw: _____
- How they were impacted: _____

- What stands out to you about the crowd's responses in vv. 5–13? (Pay attention to phrases such as "they were *all* . . .")

Deeper Discoveries ~ Speaking in Tongues

On the day of Pentecost, believers were given the ability to speak in different languages. People from different regions of the globe were able to hear God being glorified in their native tongue. This was a unique occasion when “they were all filled” and began to speak with other tongues.

Note: As we will see later on subsequent to this event, not everyone who believed received this gift. It is one of many spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4) but not meant to be the evidence of having received the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches that all believers are baptized by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13) as they become identified with Christ by faith. But the real evidence of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of the believer comes about by exhibiting the “fruit of the Spirit” found in Galatians 5:22–23.

As the church began to grow, some of these early believers spoke in tongues as a way to pray to God in private. Others spoke in tongues at larger meetings requiring interpretation for the benefit of everyone present. The Apostle Paul would establish guidelines for the church so that the gift of tongues would not be personally abused but practiced in an orderly fashion for the edification of all. We find these guidelines set forth in 1 Corinthians 14. Look them up and summarize the main point.

- a. Vv. 1–5 _____

- b. Vv. 14–33 _____

- c. Why did Paul teach that there should be orderliness to the exercising of spiritual gifts?

Is the filling of the Holy Spirit a one-time experience? Yes, in the sense that once we are filled we are also *sealed*—becoming His forever. But it doesn’t stop there, Ephesians 5 tells us to “be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs, from the spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord” (vv. 18–19 NIV). The original Greek language means to “be *being* filled”—the verb is in the present tense. This filling is to be repeated as often as we need it to allow the Holy Spirit entrance into every part of our lives—our prayers, our worship, our work, our family, our free-time choices. To be spirit-filled and spirit-led means to make Him a part of every area every day!

- d. Personal: Where do *you* need the Holy Spirit’s touch today? Will you ask Him for it?

Memory verse: Acts 2:39 Write out the verse; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.
*For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off,
as many as the Lord our God will call.*

Day Two:

Preaching with Power

Read Acts 2:14–35 for review.

What Luke records in Acts 2 is not his first mention of the Holy Spirit. Luke introduced him early on in his gospel account as being present at the incarnation and virgin birth of Jesus (Luke 1:15, 35). He also recorded the Spirit descending upon Jesus at his baptism by John (Luke 3:22). Although the disciples walked with Jesus, listened to his teachings, and fellowshiped with him for over three years, they never understood what Jesus had told them about his arrest, trial, death, and resurrection. Not until they had experienced these things for themselves did they begin to realize God had a plan much greater than their wildest imaginations. And it was the same on the day of Pentecost. Huddled together, dazed, confused and cautious, these men (and women) waited and prayed . . . and waited and prayed . . . until suddenly, they experienced one of the New Testament's greatest miracles!

It is widely believed that next to the fear of dying, what people fear most is public speaking. Yet when Peter rose to his feet that day there was no evidence of fear, in fact, quite the opposite. Only a few weeks earlier Peter found it impossible to admit he was one of Jesus' followers. Here we see him for the first time boldly proclaiming Christ to thousands of listeners.

As you carefully examine the text, observe Peter's demeanor and who stood with him. Why do you think this was? Notice that Peter didn't buffer his speech with people-pleasing rhetoric; he carefully chose specific heart-piercing words to drive home the message.

1. What does Peter reiterate from the prophet Joel about the last days? Vv. 17–21

2. The heart of Peter's message was centered on the Lord Jesus. Select the most descriptive words about Jesus that round out the picture . . .
 - a. His life – v. 22

 - b. His death – v. 23

 - c. His resurrection – v. 24

 - d. His ascension – v.33

As the crowd heard Peter preach they were struck to the core. Many in the crowd knew who Jesus of Nazareth was; they had heard Him teach, witnessed His miracles and saw Him crucified. God's Holy Spirit was bearing witness of the truth through the message.

Unity of the believers—learning how to love and live together—is the greatest identifying mark of God’s people. Next to our salvation it is the most important thing to Him. The question is: do others see *you* loving and serving the brethren?

Day Four: Peter

We all have a “giant” stalking us, one that at times appears bigger than life; at other times we fight to bring him down to manageable size so as not to allow people to notice. His name is *fear-factor*; or we could nickname him *mistake-maker*. He always shows up to taunt us when we do something wrong, at a time when we have the best of intentions. And he is there with frustrating regularity. We sometimes help him out by looking for (and prejudging) the mistakes of others, while he is actually lurking nearby—pointing out ours! Peter could’ve been the official “mistake-maker poster boy”—that is until Pentecost. Early on he was known for testing the boundaries, succumbing to pride, giving in to fear, and taking matters into his own hands. But all of his mistake-making didn’t take Jesus by surprise. Jesus knew Peter intimately better than Peter knew himself; and although Jesus dealt with Peter’s shortcomings and failures, He saw beyond them to the potential of a finished transformed life.

It was Peter’s brother Andrew who first introduced him to Jesus. Peter was one of the first called to be a disciple. He had the distinction of being among the three who formed the inner circle around the Lord. Although his strong loyalty and leadership abilities are visible throughout the four gospels, it is Peter’s impulsiveness and tendency to readily stick his foot in his mouth that we remember most—perhaps because these are the areas in which we can most easily relate.

Look up the references below where you see examples of Peter in action. What can you discern about his motive; what was the actual result?

1. Matthew 14:22–31 _____

2. Matthew 16:21–23 _____

3. Matthew 26:31–35; and 69–75 _____

Read Peter’s sermon again in Acts 2:14–36. Make note of what *you* are able to discern about the difference in Peter following the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. How do your observations encourage you regarding your own Christian witness?

Jesus knows you better than you know yourself. He didn’t give up on Peter— He won’t give up on you! The same Holy Spirit who transformed Peter’s life is working in you to transform yours. Describe *YOU*— *before* and *after* the Holy Spirit came into your life. Remember: He isn’t finished! He promises to perfect and complete that which He’s begun in you (Phil. 1:6).

Day Five: Selah . . . Pause and Ponder the Week in Review

This section of the lesson is intended to be an at-a-glance, user-friendly recap of what you've learned this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark what stands out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share in your discussion group.

1. What is your take-away-truth? How are you working to make it a part of your daily walk?

2. Write out this week's verse from memory.

3. What does this week's verse reveal to you?

4. Personal: Compose a prayer of thanksgiving for what you've learned this week.

Prayer Time: Write down the people in your group to keep in prayer this next week.

