



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

"RIDING THROUGH"

THE BOOK OF ACTS - LESSON 2

The second chapter of Acts records the exciting birth of the Church. It's a great chapter because it describes when the Holy Spirit was made available to the church corporately and to the believers individually. We see a significant change in the lives of the disciples as a result. In this chapter, we see Peter, who was known as the disciple who denied Christ (Luke 22:55-57), now come forward and preach the Gospel with incredible boldness! What a difference the Holy Spirit makes in the life of a believer. Something definitely happened on that day of Pentecost. Praise God that we, too, can experience the same power, through the Holy Spirit, as we read about in this chapter. Enjoy the Ride through Acts chapter two!

First Day

1. Let's begin today by reading Acts chapter 2. Title each section. Ask yourself the question, "What does the text say?" To answer this question, write a one or two sentence summary for each section.

Section 1: (verses 1-13) **Title:**

Summary Statement:

Section 2: (verses 14-41) **Title:**

Summary Statement:

Section 3: (verses 42-47) **Title:**

Summary Statement:

2. List any questions that you have upon first reading. Also list any key words or phrases that you find.
3. Read Acts 2:1-4 again. Describe this event.

4. What is Pentecost? (This is also known as the Feast of Weeks in Exodus 34:22-23, and the Feast of Harvest, in Exodus 23:16.) Read the following Scriptures and explain this festival in your own words. Deuteronomy 16:9-12, Numbers 28:26-31, and Leviticus 23:15-22.

The Feast of Weeks was one of the three national feasts that all the men of Israel were required to travel to Israel to observe (Exodus 23:14-19). It was a celebration in which people offered thanksgiving to God for the grain harvest and other crops. This feast marked the completion of barley harvest (Leviticus 23:15-16). Work was prohibited during this celebration. Two loaves of bread were offered to the Lord, along with other sacrifices. The word Pentecost means "fiftieth" and is celebrated 50 days after the Feast of the First Fruits. The New Testament believers now celebrated Pentecost as a form of a new harvest, in which Christ began gathering His new church together, ushered in by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples with audible, visible, and oral evidences.

5. Describe the audible evidence. What did they hear? (Acts 2:2)

The word "sound" or "noise" in verse 2 comes from the Greek word "echos." A.T. Robertson explains that it may have been like an "echoing sound as a mighty wind blowing violently." Perhaps this noise shook the whole house! Remember, it was not the wind, but the sound of wind.

6. Describe the visual evidence. What did they see? (Acts 2:3)
7. Why is fire a good symbol for the Holy Spirit?
8. Describe the oral evidence. What did they say? (Acts 2:4,12)
9. Why do you think God sent three evidences of the presence of the Holy Spirit?

Notice that the disciples heard and saw the evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit; they didn't "feel" Him. We find no emphasis on feelings, but on faith.

Exciting stuff, huh? Can you just imagine what it would have been like to be there, in that room, on that day? We need to remember that being a Christian, filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, can, and should, be just as exciting today. Are you excited to have the "Living God" dwelling inside of you? Let's **rejoice** together!

Memory Verse of the Week: "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." Acts 2:39

Second Day

Review your memory verse.

Today we will continue our study on the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

1. Read Acts 2:1-13.
2. Who gave the disciples the power to speak in "other" tongues? (vs 4)
3. Why was this event such a miracle?

****Not only were the 120 speaking in languages they didn't previously know, they were speaking in proper dialects. (vs 8)**

4. Compare and contrast this event with what took place at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). What was the purpose of each? The result?
5. What was the people's response to this phenomenon? (vs 6-7, 12-13)
6. Define the words "**amazed**" and "**marveled**."
7. When was the last time that you "**marveled**" at something God did in your life? Can you share a recent situation in which you found yourself "marveling" at the Lord?
8. Have you been taking Him, and His grace in your life, for granted?

9. In Acts 2:13, what were they being accused of?
10. Compare being drunk with wine to being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). How are they alike? How are they different? How does each alter your personality?
11. The world will always have "mockers." Have you been mocked because of your faith? What did you do? What should you do? (Read 1 Peter 2:21-23, Psalm 109:4, 1 Peter 4:16, and Romans 1:16.)

** The word "mock" is only found one other place in the New Testament. In Acts 17:32, Paul is mocked by the Athenians on Mars Hill.

This ends our lesson for today. Here's a thought to ponder ... Can you tell by your life that you're filled with the Spirit? Has He taken control of you?

Third Day

Review your memory verse. What does it mean?

In our study today, we will begin by looking at Peter, a cowering, timid fisherman who now steps forward boldly to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No longer afraid, Peter, empowered by the Holy Spirit, gives his first sermon.

1. Read Acts 2:1-41. Reread 14-24. (Remember to keep asking yourself, what does this text say? What does it mean? What does it mean to me?)
2. In what tongue did Peter speak in when he answered them?

In verse 15, Peter says they are not drunk, because it is the third hour of the day. By Jewish reckoning, the new day began at sundown and consisted of twelve hours of darkness followed by twelve hours of daylight. The third hour of the day was thus about 9 o'clock in the morning. (Homer A. Kent, Jerusalem to Rome, Studies in Acts)

Let's stop and look at Peter for a minute. Who is this man?

Peter's original name was the Hebrew "Simeon," from which he adopted the Greek version, Simon. Jesus later renamed him "Cephas" (John 1:42), which meant "rock" or "stone." He was from a city called Bethsaida (John 1:44), where he and his brother Andrew were fishermen. Peter was not a well-educated man, by any means (Acts 4:13). He was brought to Jesus by his brother Andrew and they both became part of the group of men referred to as the 12 Apostles.

Peter was the only one of the 12 that we know was married (Mark 1:30), although Scripture is silent in regard to Mrs. Peter. Peter often acted as the representative of the 12 apostles (Matthew 17:24-27) and became a leader in the early church (Acts 3:12-26). He was one of the three who formed an inner circle around Jesus (Mark 5:37, 9:2, 14:33). He was a witness to the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8) and Christ's ascension (Matthew 28:16-20).

Peter was a great man, although he had his shortcomings. Unfortunately, Peter seems to be best remembered by his faults, rather than his strengths. Before Pentecost, Peter was timid and impulsive. After Pentecost, we see a new Peter. Not a perfect Peter (Galatians 2:14), but a bold and fearless Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit.

3. Look up the following Scriptures and write a brief character sketch of Peter before Pentecost. (Matthew 26:58, 69-74, John 18:10-11, John 13:6-10, Matthew 16:21-23, Matthew 26:33-35.)

4. Look up these Scriptures and describe Peter after Pentecost. (Acts 2:14-41, 3:1-11, 5:14-16, 9:36-43, 10:24-26.)

5. Are you like Peter in any way? How? (positive or negative ...)

Jesus knew all about Peter's shortcomings, but He loved Peter dearly. He understood Peter more than anyone else. Those around him saw a fisherman. Jesus could see much more than that. He could see what Peter was becoming. Jesus could see the finished product. Peter became an example to us of humility, submission, and courage.

Do we do this? As we look at others, are we focusing on their shortcomings and faults, or do we look at them through the eyes of Jesus? Do we see what God is doing in their lives or what "hasn't" been done yet?

6. Are you a critical person, always seeing the worst, rather than the best, in others? Ask God today to change your heart and help you to look at others through His eyes -- eyes of love and forgiveness.

In verses 14-41, Peter is addressing the Jews that were present. He quotes from the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32) in verses 16-21. By doing this, Peter gives a Scriptural basis for what was taking place, assuring them that the prophet Joel had promised that one day the Spirit would come. (It is always important to have a Scriptural basis for what we do and teach.)

7. In Acts 2:17-18, what did Joel prophesy would happen in the last days, prior to the return of Jesus Christ?

In verses 19-21, Joel refers to the Day of the Lord, after the rapture of the church, when God's judgment comes upon the earth. This is known as the Great Tribulation, the 7-year period following the rapture of the church and before the millennial reign of Christ on earth (Matthew 24:29-30).

8. From Acts 2:19-20, what is going to happen?

Pentecost was not the complete fulfillment of Joel 2, but a preview of what was to come. "It is a common feature of Bible prophecy that some predictions have a partial fulfillment, followed later by another and complete fulfillment." (John Phillips, Exploring Acts.)

9. Paul also quotes from Joel in Romans 10:13. Read this verse and explain why this verse was essential to share on Pentecost.

Acts 2:21 is the key that unlocks the door to eternal life. It is the essential point of this new "**Age of Grace**." The Old Testament believers were saved "by faith" as they looked forward to the coming of the Messiah (Hebrews 11:13). The New Testament saints were "saved by faith" as they looked back on what Jesus did on the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

We presently live in the age of grace, where anyone who "calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Those who receive Him become a child of God (John 1:12). We are saved by grace, through faith, not of ourselves, or by works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Jesus is the only name God honors for salvation (Acts 4:12).

In Acts 2:23-24, Peter does some great preaching. As you read this section, notice that Peter includes both God's sovereignty, and man's responsibility, in verse 23. Sovereignty refers to the complete power God has over all creation; He exercises His will absolutely, without any necessary conditioning by a finite will, or wills. (Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia)

10. Read Acts 2:22-24. What are the main points of the Gospel? Also read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. Why is each point so important to include when you are sharing with others?

The word "delivered**" in verse 23 is from the word "**ekdotos**," which means has been given up, to either enemies or to the power of someone.

The word "foreknowledge**" is from the word "**prognosis**" and means to know beforehand. (This involves His saving grace.)

We see many verses in Scripture that stress man's responsibility to respond to the Gospel, known as man's free will (Matthew 11:28, Revelation 22:17, Acts 16:31). But this same God who addresses our free will says plainly in John 6:44 that "No man can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him ..." The Bible also teaches that God chose us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4) and we are appointed to eternal life (Acts 13:48).

These two doctrines that seem to contradict each other, actually run parallel to each other and meet together somewhere in the eternal counsels of God. God made the plan, yet man is responsible for his choices and actions. God determined beforehand that Jesus would die, but man is guilty of crucifying Him. Acts 5:30 says that the Jews crucified Him, but Jesus says in John 10:18 ... "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down Myself."

Be careful not to get tripped up over these truths. We can rest in knowing that our Almighty God has ways that are past our figuring out! (Isaiah 55:8-9, Romans 11:33-35) I love the quote by J.B. Phillips ...

"If God was small enough for us to figure out, He wouldn't be big enough for us to worship."

11. Why do you think Peter refers to Jesus as "Jesus of Nazareth"? (Acts 2:22, 3:6, 4:10, 6:14, 10:38, 22:8, 26:9)
12. In Acts 2:24, Peter says that "it was not possible that He should be held by it." What is "it"? Why is this verse so exciting?

13. Read Luke 1:37. How does this verse bring you comfort? Are you in an impossible situation right now? Maybe your marriage is failing or you're struggling financially. Maybe you feel backed up against a wall with no way out. What does God promise to those who love Him in Romans 8:28?

This ends our lesson for today. This chapter is loaded with "great stuff!" Let's thank Him for loving us and allowing us to be a part of His family.

Fourth Day

Write out your verse by memory.

We pick up our study today as Peter continues to preach in Acts 2:25-41. Peter now quotes David, who was not only a king, but a prophet as well. It sounds like David is speaking about himself, but actually he is speaking prophetically of Jesus. He quotes from Psalm 16:8-11, as a prophecy verifying Jesus' Resurrection. Although David wrote this centuries earlier, he was looking ahead, foreseeing the Resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:31).

1. Read Acts 2:25-41. Look up any words you don't know the meaning of.
2. How do we know that David wasn't talking about himself? (Acts 2:29 and 34)
3. Acts 2:30 says that Jesus is the fruit of David's body, in the flesh. What does this statement mean? Read the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1:1-17. Can you see why Jesus is called the "Son of David"?

****According to the flesh, Jesus would be a descendent of David by his human nature. According to the Spirit and by His divine nature, Jesus was to be David's Lord, not his son.**

4. What did David say would not happen to the body and soul of the Messiah? (Acts 2:27, 31)
5. How did Jesus' flesh not see corruption?

What does David mean when he says that "His soul was not left in Hades"?

The word "Hades" in the New Testament is the same as the Old Testament word "Sheol." Scholars translate them as hell, the grave, a place of torment, or the invisible state. There are a few views on what this Scripture means. Many scholars believe that this verse refers to the three days between the death of Christ and His ascension. They believe that after His death, the soul and spirit of Jesus went to Hades, or hell. They teach that hell was made up of two compartments. The righteous compartment -- called Abraham's Bosom, or paradise -- was where all the believers went when they died, before the Resurrection of Christ. The unrighteous people went to a separate compartment called Abaddon. Those who believe this use the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 as evidence. They state that both compartments were in Sheol or Hades. When Jesus died, He descended into hell for three days (Matthew 12:39-40), into the righteous compartment, and set those captives free (1 Peter 3:19-20, Ephesians 4:8-10). When He rose, He took "Paradise" with Him to Heaven. He emptied the righteous compartment of believers into their new home, Heaven.

This doctrine has been widely accepted, and is the most popular view. It remains in what is known as "The Apostles Creed," although it was not added until 390 AD by a man named Rufinus.

This view has been challenged by other scholars who believe that this theory is based on inferences and obscure passages from the Bible. They believe that the Bible never teaches that Jesus went to Hades or endorses the two-compartment theory. They believe that Jesus went to Paradise, which was where God the Father is. When Jesus said, "It is finished" in John 19:30, He meant it. If He still had to go down to hell, etc., He would not have been able to claim that His work was done.

Another point they make is that the phrase "the heart of the earth," used in Matthew 12:39-40 does not refer to hell at all, but to the physical grave. The body of Christ lay in the grave for three days. Also, referring to the story of Lazarus and the rich man, the rich man "lifted" his eyes "up," not "over" to the other compartment (Luke 16:19-23). Abraham was very far away.

It is interesting to note that the Old Testament saints went **UP** to be with the Lord, not down. 2 Kings 2:11 says that Elijah went **UP** into Heaven. It does not say that he went down to paradise to wait until Jesus came to release him. When Jesus told the thief on the cross that he would be with Him in paradise (Luke 23:43), He did not say that today they would be resting in a subterranean cavern with the other saints. Before Christ gave up His last breath He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit" (Luke 23:46). Where were the hands of the Father?

There are many other arguments, along with Scriptures, that both sides use. I challenge you to search the Scriptures for yourself to see what you believe to be

true. Remember, your salvation is not based on either view. (Praise the Lord for that!) It's healthy to debate Scripture, but don't ever let it become a source of contention or division.

As Peter preaches in Acts 2:22-36, he covers six important doctrines about Christ. Read these over and make sure you understand the meaning of each. If you have any questions, your group leader will be happy to point you to Scriptures for further study.

"Incarnation"- Jesus is God, who became a man. (vs 22b)

"Authentication"- He proved His divinity by performing miracles. (vs 22c)

"Crucifixion"- Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins. (vs 23)

"Resurrection"- Jesus was raised from the dead, conquering death. (vs 24)

"Ascension"- Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father. (vs 33)

"Glorification"- Jesus is exalted as Lord over all creation. (vs 36)

This ends our lesson for today. We sure had a lot of reading and a lot to think about. Spend some time today meditating on who Jesus is. **Is He your Lord?**

Fifth Day

Repeat and explain your memory verse to someone else. (Isn't it exciting to memorize Scripture?)

Today we will be looking at the response of the people to Peter's message. (Remember, the people who were present were mostly Jews. The Gospel was preached first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles in Acts 10.) As you read these verses, think back to the day of your conversion. Wasn't it an exciting day?

1. Read Acts 2:37-47.
2. How did the people respond to the message? (vs 37)

The word **"cut"** or **"pierce"** is from the Greek word "katanusso" which means to prick with a sharp point or to puncture with a spear.

3. Peter explains how to be saved in verse 38. Also read Romans 10:9-10.
How are we saved?
4. What does the word "repent" mean?

5. Who is the Holy Spirit promised to? (vs 29)

The empowering of the Holy Spirit is for you today. Not only you, but for your kids, and their kids, and their kids ... until the return of Jesus Christ!! (Remember, John the Baptist had promised that the Messiah would come, baptizing them in the Holy Spirit in John 1:29.)

6. How many were saved that day? (Acts 2:41)

The word "**perv**erse" in verse 40 is from the word "skolios" where we get our word scoliosis. It means winding, twisting, crooked, and dishonest. They lived in a crooked generation at the time. Hasn't changed much, has it? The ways of this world are even more twisted than before.

7. According to Acts 2:38 and 41, what were they instructed to do after they were saved?

Baptism is an expression of your faith after you've been saved. These verses do not imply that baptism is a step that leads to your salvation. In fact, in Acts 10 when Peter preached in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentile believers before baptism was even mentioned. Baptism is simply a sign to the world that you now desire to be identified with Christ.

For many a Jew, baptism meant persecution, being cut off from their family and friends, and denial of any place in the Jewish synagogue or place in society.

8. Have you been baptized? We are told in Scripture to be baptized, after we repent from our sins and confess Jesus as our Savior. We need to obey this command and let the world know that we belong to Jesus!

9. Read Acts 2:42-47. After they were saved, what four things did they continue doing?

A. They continued in _____. It was important for the early church to learn truth. Doctrine always comes first. Experience is always tested by doctrine, not doctrine by experience. **Does your church teach the Word of God?**

B. They continued in _____. "Koinonia" is a commonality based on faith in Christ. It means sharing with one another the joys and sorrows of your walk with the Lord. **Does your church promote fellowship?**

C. They continued in _____. Participating in the Lord's Supper keeps our minds and hearts focused on the Lord. It was instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper (Luke 22:14-20). **Does your church partake in communion together?**

D. They continued in _____. They now had direct access to the throne of God through Jesus Christ. Praying together is an essential part of ministry. **Does your church have prayer meetings?**

Anne Ortlund writes in her book Up With Worship, "Every congregation has a choice to be one of two things. You can choose to be a bag of marbles, single units that don't affect each other except in collision. On Sunday mornings you can choose to go to church or to sleep in; who really cares whether there are 192 or 193 marbles in a bag? Or you can choose to be a bag of grapes. The juices begin to mingle and there is no way to extricate yourself if you tried. Each is part of all."

10. These four things should be the priority in a church to be healthy and well balanced. But it's also important for you personally to be participating in all four. Are you? Are you practicing these things within your family? Do you read the Word together daily? Do you have fellowship with other believers? Does your family take communion at home? Do you pray together? Make a list of areas that you might need to change both in your family and individually.

11. Explain what was happening in Acts 2:44-46.

Notice in verse 46 the believers worshipped in the temple and in their homes. They didn't only practice their Christianity on Sundays, but every day.

12. Is Jesus in your home or do you leave Him at church on Sundays? Is there anything that you practice in your home that would make you uncomfortable if Jesus was there?

The people were full of joy and praising God gladly. It was as if they couldn't contain themselves. They were thankful to be saved!

13. Where's your joy? Are you gladly praising God or have you lost the joy somewhere along the way? How can you get it back? Read Jeremiah 15:16.

That's it for this week. A lot to think about, wasn't it? You can sum up Acts 2 in four short words: **The Church is Born! Rejoice!**