



ACTS
“The Church Is Born”
LESSON 2

Why do most of today's churches lack the power and impact that characterized the first-century church? A.W. Tozer observes, "I remind you that there are churches so completely out of the hands of God that if the Holy Spirit withdrew from them, they wouldn't find it out for many months."¹ It has been said that many of today's churches have been to Calvary for forgiveness but have not gone to Pentecost for the power to live the Christian life. C.H. Spurgeon once said, "Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing. We are ships without wind. We are useless."² Most Christians know the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church occurred on the Day of Pentecost, but few realize the deep symbolism of that date. The law was given to Moses on Pentecost in the Old Testament and as a result of the sin of Israel 3,000 people died on that day. By contrast, on the day of Pentecost in the New Testament the Holy Spirit was given and 3,000 in Israel were saved. Pentecost (Greek for fifty days) was one of seven festivals or feasts described in the Old Testament and was one of three (along with Passover and Tabernacles) which required Jewish men to pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate in the Temple. This was the reason for the large and diverse crowd in Jerusalem at this time. Each of these festivals served as a type, or a foreshadowing, of an aspect of the coming of Christ as seen in the following chart showing the four spring feasts:

Festival	Scripture	Date	Significance	Fulfillment in Jesus
Passover (<i>Pesach</i>)	Leviticus 23:5	<i>Nisan</i> 14 (March/April)	Celebration of deliverance from bondage and the passing over of death through blood of the Lamb.	Pointed to the Messiah as our Passover Lamb crucified on the day of preparation for feast at the same hour lambs were being slaughtered for meal. (1 Corinthians 5:7)
Unleavened Bread (<i>Chag HaMotzi</i>)	Leviticus 23:6	<i>Nisan</i> 15 (March/April)	To celebrate exodus from slavery they ate unleavened bread (w/out yeast) for seven days.	Unleavened Bread symbolized the body of Christ. <i>Matzah</i> was striped (by His stripes we are healed), pierced (they shall look upon whom is pierced) and pure (without yeast a symbol for sin). (1 Corinthians 5:8)

Festival	Scripture	Date	Significance	Fulfillment in Jesus
First Fruits (<i>Reshit Katzir</i>)	Leviticus 23:11	<i>Nisan</i> 16 (March/April)	Celebrated the fertility of the land God gave Israel. A presentation of the early crop or first fruit of spring planting.	Paul refers to Jesus as the ‘first fruits from the dead’ (1 Corinthians 15:20). This is the day we call Easter.
Pentecost (<i>Shavu’ot</i>)	Leviticus 23:16	<i>Sivan</i> 6 (May/June)	Celebration of God’s provision in harvest. Offering of lambs and 2 loaves of bread.	Great harvest of souls and the provision of the Holy Spirit to both Jews and Gentiles. (Acts 2:4)

As a sports fan I will sometimes debate with my friends which athlete in a particular sport has been the greatest game changer in history. As a track coach my nod goes to Roger Bannister, the first man to break the four-minute barrier in the mile. For decades it was thought impossible that man could run that fast until Bannister did it in 1954. Since his game-changing performance, breaking the four minute barrier has become so routine that even a select group of high school runners have broken it. Many within the church would define the day of Pentecost as the game changer in the life of the church. Merriam-Webster defines a game changer as, “a newly introduced element or factor that changes an existing situation or activity in a significant way.”³ Using this definition, the Holy Spirit is the ultimate game changer. Peter, who had cowered before a servant girl, was now empowered by the filling of the Spirit to fearlessly preach the first gospel message to an overflowing crowd. The crowd, which had called for Christ’s death weeks before, under the conviction of the Spirit, repented and received salvation. In our study of Acts chapter 2 we can learn about the structure and life of the blossoming infant church, and study an effective template for the presentation of the gospel. However, preeminent in our study has to be a focus on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit which is now available to all believers (“You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 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 2:38–39). The importance in the life of the believer of the often neglected third member of the Godhead cannot be overstated as shared by Max Lucado, “The wizard [of Oz] says look inside yourself and find self. God says look inside yourself and find the Holy Spirit. The first will get you to Kansas. The latter will get you to heaven. Take your pick.”⁴

¹<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/holy-spirit-A.W.Tozer>, Tozer Pulpit

²<http://keithmalcomson.weebly.com/quotes-on-the-holy-spirit.html> ³<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/game%20changer> ⁴<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/holy-spirit-Max-Lucado>,

Experiencing the Heart of Jesus

Memory Verse

“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 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 2:38–39

Prayer

Start by praying over the passage and asking the Holy Spirit to give you fresh insights and wisdom in understanding it. Then read through the entire passage two or three times.

Day 1– The Coming of the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:1–4

Scholars are in some disagreement whether the “they” in verse 1 refers to just the 12 apostles or the entire 120 mentioned (Acts 1:15). As we read today’s passage we will see the arrival of the often-promised (for example: John 7:39, 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7) gift of the Holy Spirit descending on His followers.

1. How was this passage a fulfillment of what Jesus had promised His disciples just before His ascension (see Acts 1:4–8)? _____

2. What two similes (a simile uses the words like or as to compare two objects) does Luke use to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit? _____

3. Why are these similes appropriate comparisons to the Holy Spirit, and what do they teach us about Him? _____

- a. John 3:5–8

- b. Exodus 3:2–6

4. As they were filled with the Spirit in verse 4 they began to speak in “other tongues” (which we will investigate in Day 2). Some feel the two are always associated together (that is, speaking in tongues always occurs with the filling of the Holy Spirit). Based on other fillings in Acts, does this doctrine match the pattern as seen in Scripture? _____

- a. Acts 4:31 _____

- b. Acts 6:5 _____

c. Acts 8:17 _____

d. Acts 9:17 _____

Day 2– The Crowd’s Response – Acts 2:5–13

As we have seen in our introduction, due to the Feast of Pentecost, Jews from throughout the Roman Empire were present in Jerusalem in large numbers. The order of the nations listed is roughly counterclockwise from east to west around the Roman Empire.

1. What is the message being proclaimed to everyone in their native tongues? _____

2. The speakers were identified as Galileans (Nazareth was in Galilee); how did this make the multi-lingual presentation of the gospel even more incredible (hint: see John 1:45–46)?

3. What two reactions did the outburst of tongues have on the crowd? _____

a. It is ironic that some of the mockers accused the disciples of being drunk on new wine, when the disciples were actually speaking under the influence of the Spirit. What does Ephesians 5:18 teach us about this very subject? _____

Day 3– Peter’s Sermon Part 1 – Acts2: 14–21

1. What defense does Peter give in response to the mocker’s claims? _____

2. Peter then explains they have just witnessed a partial fulfillment of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28–32).

Verses 12–18 seem to reflect the present tense while verses 19–21 speak in the future events. What does Joel describe, as mentioned in verses 12–18 that seem to be fulfilled as recorded in the Book of Acts? _____

3. What future events are described in verses 19–21 that will apparently be fulfilled as described in the Book of Revelations on the other side of the Church Age? _____

4. What is the most reassuring part of the passage taken from Joel to believers of all generations, past, present, and future? _____

5. How does Peter’s appeal to the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy help support his case for Christ? ? _____

Day 4– Peter’s Sermon Part 2 – Acts 2:22–39

1. What evidences does Peter provide in verses 22–24 of Jesus as the Christ?

2. Verse 23 is a balance between the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God and freewill of man. What roles did each play in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus?

3. Explain Peter’s use of the messianic psalms (16, 2:1–9, 89:3, 132:11, and 138:11) to prove the deity and resurrection of Jesus. _____

4. It has been said that if you share the good news (of the resurrection) you must also share the bad news—what was the bad news? _____

5. Refer to John 16:8 and describe the role of the Holy Spirit in the response of the people as recorded in verse 37. _____

6. What key elements are recorded in the process of salvation in verse 38? _____

Day 5– The New Church Grows – Acts 2:40–47

1. What do you think is meant by “be saved from this perverse generation,” and how might that look today? _____

2. The number of those responding to the first invitation in the church was nothing less than a miracle. What did the “new believer’s growth planner” include to help disciple the new converts? _____

3. What can we glean about the structure and practice of the newly formed church?

4. The number of believers continued to grow; what was the source of that growth and what does 1 Corinthians 3:5–8 teach on this?

Day 6– Take Away / Summary

If one of your friends at work or a neighbor were to ask you what you did on Tuesday, you would tell them you went to a Bible study. The next question would likely be, “What did you learn?” We often summarize an entire athletic contest or a movie in a few brief sentences, and easily convey the essence of the event. Now apply these same skills to give a summary of the passage in a sentence or two. Then, in an additional sentence or two, describe what impact this passage will have on how you live.

Memory Verse

“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 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 2:38–39

Key Words/Phrases

Write out the definition of these key words. You can use a regular dictionary, or go to one of the Greek sources listed in the Tool Box at the end of the study. You may also use a concordance to see where else and how the word is used in the Bible.

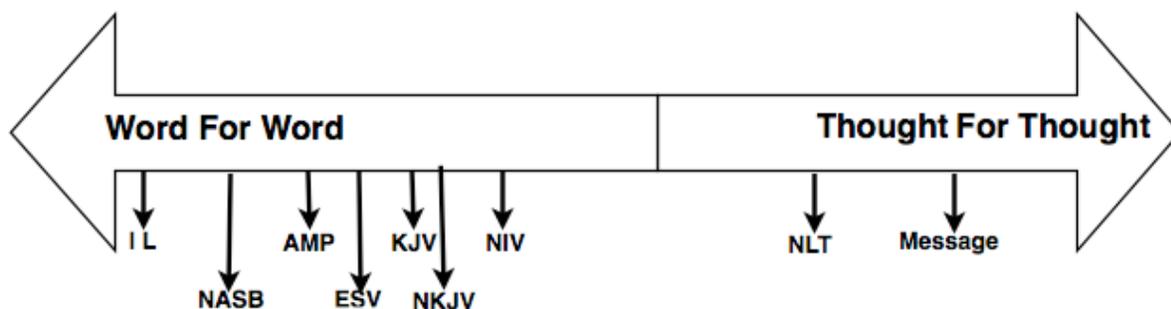
Filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4)

Remission of Sins (Acts 2:38)

Tool Box

Step 1: The Bible. Read the passage in a couple of different versions. If you are having trouble understanding a passage, choose a more dynamic version such as *New Living Translation* or *The Message*). To focus in on the exact meaning of a verse, choose a more literal translation such as *New American Standard Bible* or *New King James Version*.

Step 2: Study Tools. Use these to help you dig deeper. Background Information: 1) Unger's Bible Dictionary 2) Bible Dictionaries online at biblestudytools.com and blueletterbible.com. Word Studies: 1) Zodhiates' *The Complete Word Study New Testament* 2) Vine's *Complete Expository Dictionary* 3) Strong's *Dictionary of Bible Words* 4) The two websites listed above



Word for Word Translations

NASB – New American Standard Version <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-American-Standard-Bible-NASB/>

AMP - Amplified Bible <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Amplified-Bible-AMP/>

ESV - English Standard Version <http://www.esvstudybible.org/>

KJV – King James Version <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/King-James-Version-KJV-Bible/>

NKJV – New King James Version <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-King-James-Version-NKJV-Bible/>

NIV – New International Version <http://www.biblica.com/niv/>

Thought for Thought Translations

NLT – New Living Translation <http://newlivingtranslation.com/>

The Message – <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Message-MSG-Bible/>

