

Study 3: Acts chapter 2

Introduction

Chapter 2 follows very closely after chapter 1. It is the “*big bang*” at the start of the Acts narrative that then rolls out over the rest of the book. Right from the start we can see exactly what God requires from those who want to make their lives right and to be obedient to Him.

Body of the Study

Timing: ***When did these events occur?***

Content: ***What are the major events?***

Cast: ***Who are the major players?***

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What were they doing “daily” in 2:46?

Homework:

- *Read the notes as a review of the study.*
- *What day of the week did the events of chapter 2 occur? Is the day of the week significant?*
- *Read chapter 3 in preparation for next week’s study.*

Notes for study 3: Acts chapter 2

Introduction

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Body of the Study

When did the events of Acts chapter 2 occur?

We can be certain of the time of the events described in the chapter. It was “...*When the day of Pentecost had come...*” (2:1), and was 50 days after the Sabbath of the Passover (Lev 23:15 ie 7 weeks and 1 day), so it was always the first day of the week. The Jews were to come to Jerusalem for three feasts – preferably every year, and if not every year, then at least once in their life. It was the year AD 33.

The first of these (in the Jewish year) was Passover (the 14th day of the 1st month), the second was the feast of Pentecost (also called the feast of weeks because it was 7 weeks after Passover), and the third was the feast of tabernacles much later in the year (in the 7th month). People who travelled great distances from around the world to come to Jerusalem for Passover would most likely “hang around” for Pentecost before returning home.

The significance of this will become apparent as we study through the early chapters of Acts.

Content of chapter 1

Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles; speaking in tongues; prophecy of Joel fulfilled; Peter convinces the Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and that they had crucified Him; told to repent and be baptised; Lord added saved to the church.

The major players in chapter 1

The 12 apostles, particularly Peter.

The coming of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit came, just as Jesus had predicted (prophesied) and promised to the apostles the night before He died. The promise is re-iterated in Acts 1, and Jesus told the apostles to “hang around Jerusalem” until they received it.

Receiving the Holy Spirit should have come as no real shock, although there certainly was a great deal of “surprise” as to *how it was manifested*. It’s a bit like a birthday present. You know that the birthday is coming, you know that you will get a birthday present, and even although you expect to receive it, there’s a great deal of surprise in what the present actually turns out to be.

With the Holy Spirit came *power* (1:8). The apostles were “different people” after they received the Holy Spirit. They demonstrated that they had the Holy Spirit, by performing “*miracles, signs and wonders*” by *the power of God*.

Only a few days before, the apostles are confused. They are asking about “...*restoring the kingdom...*” (1:6). They clearly had not grasped the spiritual nature of the kingdom, and Jesus plan to implement it. Jesus had said to them the night before He died, that He had “...*many things to say to you, but you cannot comprehend them now... But when the Holy Spirit comes, he will show you these things, and things to come...*” (my paraphrase of Jn 16:12-13). Now, after they have received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), they speak with authority; they are not afraid to go and face anything the world can throw at them; they demonstrate their power, and confirm the things they said by miracles.

How was the Holy Spirit evident?

The HS had come upon the apostles, and was evident to those who were there. “...*Suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind...*” (1:2) Those present could not help hearing the sound, for “...*it filled the whole house...*”. In addition, had they been left wondering what this meant, then a second thing happened. “...*There appeared to them divided tongues like fire...*” Not only did they *hear* the sound, but they also *saw* the revelation from God.

The apostles received this “...*Baptism with the Holy Spirit...*” that Jesus had promised to them in 1:5. Notice that the fire was *divided*, and that “...*it sat upon each of them...*”. Luke uses the singular here, to describe the fiery tongues – ie “...*one sat on each of them...*” (2:3 NKJV). So they all received the same experience, with a different fiery tongue sitting on each of their heads.

Who was there?

Many have concluded that the 120 were there, and therefore want to include the 120 in receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit. However, we can see that this is not the case for several reasons.

Firstly, the promise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit was for the apostles, and them alone. This is the case in the discourse in John – there was no-one there except Jesus and the 11 (Judas had already left). Secondly, the promise is re-iterated in Acts 1 (as discussed in the previous study), where he told them (the 11) to wait for the promise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit “...*not many days hence...*” (1:4-5).

Thirdly, and to put the matter beyond all doubt, the context of chapter 2 is set by the last verse of chapter 1, which says “...*(Matthias) was numbered with the eleven apostles... And when the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place...*” (1:26-2:1)

Who came together?

This was a big event in Jerusalem, which is demonstrated by the 3000 that were baptised later that day. The events were broadcast around, and *the multitude* came together when they heard about it. Remember that there were people everywhere from all around the (then known) world “...*From every nation under heaven...*” (1:5 NKJV). They are listed in verse 9. It was a public holiday in Jerusalem, businesses were closed, and it was still early in the day.

Find on a map, the places where these people had come from.



These people were all “...**Jews**, *out of every nation under heaven...*” (1:5), despite coming from all corners of the Roman world. Luke tells us in 11:19 that initially the gospel was preached “...*to no-one but the Jews...*”. This should not be a surprise, and we will deal with it in greater detail in future lessons. Paul said in the Roman letter that the gospel was “...*for the Jew first, but also for the Gentile...*” (Rom 1:16, 2:9,10).

What did they hear?

The events of Pentecost are pivotal in our understanding of the unveiling of the gospel, and also of the revealing and work of the Holy Spirit. Those who were there had the full experience, both seeing and hearing the things associated with the event. Luke has (in part) described what they saw, and we are not left to wonder what it was that they heard, for he tells us that they said “...*We are hearing every man speak in our own language from where we were born...*” (1:6). What they heard was *languages*, not *noise* proceeding from their mouths. It was understandable and discernable. Many places in the New Testament talk about “speaking in tongues”, but right here we have explained for us exactly what it is, and what it means.

Further, we note that what they heard them speak was “...*the wonderful works of God...*”. It was something that was coherent and made sense, and there was no doubt as to where it had originated. That this was confounding and confusing to those present would almost go without saying. “...*Some were amazed, and were in doubt, asking what does this mean?...*” (1:12). Remember, that the apostles also had the *visual evidence* of the fire on their heads, and the *noise* like a roaring wind that had raised the attention in the first place.

But, there were still disbelievers. “...*Others mocking said these people are full of new wine...*” (1:12). Think about the situation here. These people heard the wind-like noise, saw the visual evidence of the fire-like tongues on the heads of the speakers, heard them speak plainly in their own native language (the language of the hearers), and heard the clear and coherent message of praising God, and yet they rejected the evidence! Why is it that people reject the facts in the face of such overwhelming evidence? It underlies a problem with the hearers, not a problem with the evidence. Finally, Peter points out to them that these men are not drunk, as it is only 9 am in the morning.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit

This is declared to be the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy, about how God would pour out His Spirit, and people would prophesy. Joel said “...*It shall come to pass in the last days...*” (2:17; Joel 2:28). The prophecy of Joel was that “something” was going to happen, and it was going to happen “...*in the last days...*” Peter said that what they were experiencing was what Joel had prophesied. The clear implications are that the day of Pentecost was in “the last days”!

Whilst that might seem obvious enough, there is an increasing view in the world of coming to the “end-times”, many people say that we have now (ie recently) begun living in the last days, and that Christ will return soon. But we must not forget that we have been living in the last days since the day of Pentecost. Further to this, the Hebrew writer said “...*God has in these last days spoken to us through His Son...*” (Heb 1:2). Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians did not think that the “last days” were yet two thousand years off, but he was anticipating that Christ could come at anytime – even in his own lifetime. (1 Thess 4:15).

Who “stood up and took the lead” and was it significant?

Jesus had told Peter that he was going to give to him the “...*keys of the kingdom...*” (Mt 16:18). He would be the one who would “open the door” of the kingdom. It was Peter who took the lead in Acts 1 when Matthias was appointed; it was Peter who took the lead in Acts 2 when the gospel was first preached; and it was Peter who took the lead in Acts 10 (as we will see in future lessons) at the conversion of the first Gentiles.

Outline of Peter's sermon

Peter already has the audience's attention, and he takes them on a journey producing evidence for what he has to say. The first piece of evidence is the fulfilment of prophecy – "...*this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:...*" (2:16 NKJV). There was no doubt that they were experiencing something unique, and Peter points out that it was exactly in line with prophecy. There were many other prophecies that had been fulfilled in recent days (such as Isaiah's prophecy's of Christ's suffering (Is 53), and the fulfilment of the Passover in type (Ex 12).

Peter then declares Jesus to them:

- 1 He was approved of God by the miracles He did (vs 22)
- 2 They themselves were witnesses of these things (vs 22)
- 3 He was taken and crucified by (their) wicked hands (vs 23)
- 4 God raised him up again (vs 24)

He then declares the resurrection:

- 1 The prophets (David) foretold it (vs25)
- 2 Many of them were witnesses of it (vs 24)
- 3 His flesh "*was resting in hope*" (vs 26)
- 4 His soul would not stay in hades (vs 27)
- 5 "*Made known the ways of life*" (vs 28)
- 6 Therefore David foresaw that Christ would be resurrected (vs31)

The audience was presented with irrefutable evidence, and had reached the point where they were fully convinced that Jesus was not just an ordinary man (seen as a troublemaker by many of the Jewish leaders), but He was in fact the Messiah who had been promised to come. They had also truly connected the fact that Jesus was put to death because of "the mob" that lobbied Pilate, and many of them who had done it were in the audience "...*God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ...*" (2:36 NKJV Emphasis mine).

They were convicted in their heart that they were responsible for Jesus death. Rather than putting to death an imposter who was claiming to be the Messiah, that had put to death the one who really was the Messiah. Their response to Peter (and the rest of the apostles) was "*Oh No!!! What are we going to do now!!!*" (2:37).

They were responsible for the death of the Messiah. They had offended God by causing the righteous Messiah to be killed, having been accused of things that He did not do. They needed to be made right again in the sight of God, so that their sins might be forgiven.

Peter's response

It is clear that these people already believed in Jesus as the Messiah, having just heard Peter's sermon. Peter takes them "where they are" in their journey back to God. We are going to see this in action several times in our study of Acts. From the context of the story in each case, the people *already believed*, or had *already repented* of their sins, and when this is the case, there is no need for them to be told to do those things again.

Although it is (sadly) "popular" in the world to tell people to "*invite Jesus into their heart*", ***there is nowhere in Scripture*** where people seeking to be made right with God, are told to do this. Peter tells them to "...*Change your hearts, and let each one of you be immersed (baptised) in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins might be forgiven...*" (2:38 McCord).

As a result of their obedience, they are promised "...*you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...*" (2:38 NKJV). They are not told that they would be *immersed* with the spirit like the apostles had been, nor that they would get *something* that the spirit would give them, but they had full expectation of receiving *the spirit as a gift*. The promise of forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit was not limited to just those few thousand people who had gathered in the Temple in Jerusalem on that day, but "... *the promise is to you...and to your children...and to all who are afar off (Gentiles)...even as many as the Lord our God shall call...*" (2:39 NKJV).

If only God can save us, what is meant by verse 40?

It is true that we are totally reliant on God for our salvation. We were helpless cases. Only the perfect sacrifice of Jesus could make us right with God. But whilst God *provides the means for us to be saved*, (ie the perfect blood sacrifice of Jesus) it is up to us to decide to accept the sacrifice.

In 2:38, the Jews were told *to do something* (to repent, and to be baptised). God did not then, and He does not now impose on us the salvation that He has made available. In fact, it is just that – He has made it available – not mandatory! Peter is *pleading* with the hearers to avail themselves of this salvation – “...*save yourselves!*...”

Peter has told the people to repent, and we can conclude that repentance was required before they were baptised. But we can also read that “...*many of them believed his message and were baptised...*” (2:41 TEV). No-one who did not believe was baptised (or if they were, it didn’t do them any good).

We can see therefore that only people who were old enough to believe would have been immersed. Before a person is immersed, they must believe in Jesus. “...*He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him...*” (Heb 11:6 NKJV).

What was accomplished on that day?

That day was the culmination of God’s revelation that had been in preparation for thousands of years. The Jewish feast of Pentecost became a celebration of the Lord giving the Law to Moses on Mt Sinai. And it was on this very day that Peter brought forth the Law of Christ as God established His church. People responded to the gospel, and “...*there were added unto them three thousand souls...*” (2:41KJV). It is implicit that they were added to something. Firstly, they were added to the number of disciples already there in Jerusalem. We know that there were about 120 present when Matthias was elected as an apostle. However, Paul tells us that the Lord appeared to over five hundred brethren at once, so the number of disciples in Jerusalem must have been at least five hundred, and probably many more. It is more than likely that the Lord’s appearance was **NOT** to all of the disciples, but rather to those who were together in one place. What they were added to was the “ecclesia”, the “assembly”, the “brothers”, or as it is referred to in 2:47 the “church”. These are all descriptions of the same thing.

The Lord was the one who was doing the adding. It is not man that adds them, but the Lord who keeps the records of those who are His. Neither can man “decide” that he wants to “join the church”. When we fulfil the requirements that God has set (by being immersed into Christ in demonstration of our faith), then it is God who does the adding.

“Wonders and Signs”

Jesus had performed many miracles during His ministry, and their purpose was to demonstrate that He was the Son of God (Acts 2:22; Jn 3:2; Jn 20:30-31; Lk 5:17-26; Rom 1:4). Immediately after Pentecost we see miracles being performed by the apostles in demonstration of the power of God working through the action of the Holy Spirit. But note that the wonders and signs were done by the apostles. Until we get to chapter 6, no miracles or other supernatural demonstrations are performed by the hands of any men except the apostles. We will explore this further when we get to chapter 6 (and when they arise in the intervening chapters).

The pattern of worship

Immediately after the establishment of the church we see the worship pattern revealed:

“...*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...*” (2:42 NIV).

In the apostle’s teaching, they were being taught the word of God (through preaching 1Cor 1:21; Acts 20:7). In fellowship, they were encouraging one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual

songs, (Eph 5:19) as well as participating in the giving of their means (2 Cor 8:4). In breaking of bread, they were partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20, Acts 20:7). In prayers, they were talking to God and supporting one another as they petitioned God for His help and blessings.

But more than just engaging in "acts of worship" they were involved in a deep intimate relationship with each other. This was not just a "coming together once a week" kind of fellowship, and they were "...with one another daily..." (2:46) and "...did not regard their possessions as their own..." (4:32) but "...had all things common..." (2:44).

In 1 Cor 12, and Rom 12, Paul describes the interaction of the Christians in the church as being like that of a physical body. All of the parts are dependent on one another, and all work in perfect harmony. This needs a lot more than just meeting together one per week – it needs the "daily interaction" where we share with one another how we are doing in our lives, how God is working in our lives, and how we are growing together in our walk with Him.

Why sell their possessions?

The Jews had come from all over the world. Many had come for Passover and stayed for the seven weeks until Pentecost. Now, they have become Christians – what are they to do? How can they return home now? Importantly, how are they going to support themselves and feed themselves? (They are starting to run out of funds on the credit cards, and now are having real problems). So, those who had possessions sold them and the apostles used the money to support the brethren who were there in Jerusalem.

What were they doing "daily" in 2:46?

Some people read this verse, and say that the "daily...breaking of bread" was the daily partaking of the Lord's Supper. But note that the verse says that they were "eating their meat" or "eating their food". Both of these would preclude this being the Lord's Supper.

Below is a comparison of many translations of this verse (ie many Greek scholars interpretation of what this verse means). We can see that it is clear that it was not the daily observance of the Lord's Supper.

Acts 2:46 – What was it that they did? Was it the Lord's Supper on a daily basis, or was it having a meal together?

Green	And continuing steadfastly with one mind day by day in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they shared food in gladness and simplicity of heart,
ICB	The believers met together in the Temple every day. They all had the same purpose. They broke bread in their homes, happy to share their food with joyful hearts
Cassirer	They persevered with one accord in visiting the temple day by day, and as they broke bread, in this house or that they took their share of food, being filled with exultation and in simplicity of heart.
Phillips	Day after day they met by common consent in the Temple; they broke bread together in their homes sharing meals with simple joy.
NIV	Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,
ASV	And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart,
CEV	Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely,
McGarvey	And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house received their food with gladness and singleness of heart,
Reese	And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, breaking bread from house to house they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

Bruce	They met together constantly in the temple day by day and, breaking bread at home, they shared their food with exultation and generosity of heart,
Jerusalem	They went as a body to the temple every day but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously;
KJV	And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,
NKJV	So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
GNB	Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts,
Basic Engl	And day by day, going in agreement together regularly to the Temple and taking broken bread together in their houses, they took their food with joy, and with true hearts,
Moffatt	Day after day they resorted with one accord to the temple and broke bread together in their own homes; they ate with a glad and simple heart,
RSV	And day by day, attending to the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts,
NEB	With one mind they kept up their daily attendance at the temple, and, breaking bread in private houses, shared their meals with unaffected joy,
NWT	And day after day they were in constant attendance at the temple with one accord, and they took their meals in private homes and partook of food with great rejoicing and sincerity of heart,
NRSV	Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,
Weymouth	And day by day attending constantly in the Temple with one accord, and breaking bread at home, they took their meals with great happiness and single-heartedness,
20th Cent	Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the Temple Courts, and to the Breaking of Bread at their homes, while they partook of their food in simple-hearted gladness,
NASB	And day by day continuing with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,
Knox	They persevered with one accord, day by day, in the temple worship, and, as they broke bread in this house or that, took their share of food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
RV	And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart,
McCord	They spent much time everyday in the temple with one mind, and broke bread from house to house, sharing food in gladness and singleness of heart,
Campbell	And they continued unanimously in the temple every day; and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their refreshment with joy and simplicity of heart;
Living	They worshiped together regularly at the Temple each day, met in small groups in homes for communion, and shared their meals with great joy and thankfulness
Amplified	And day after day they regularly assembled in the temple with united purpose, and in their homes they broke bread [including the Lord's supper]. They partook of their food with gladness and simplicity and generous hearts,
Petersen	They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God.