

The Historical Stories of the Acts of the Apostles

Lesson 2 Acts 2:14 – Acts 4:4

On May 26th, AD 30, Jews from all over the known world gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Day of Pentecost just as they had for over 1,400 years. To their amazement and bewilderment, the miraculous presence of the Holy Spirit overshadowed the normal activities of the festival. The gift of the promised Holy Spirit changed the eleven apostles and produced the most incredible sign since the ascension of the Lord. Their ability to speak the languages of the people from all over the world mesmerized the inhabitants of the city that day causing an enormous crowd to gather in the streets of Jerusalem. After the crowd gathered in one place, Peter stood to give his second message in the Scripture. Unlike his first, this message came from the Lord – empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Peter's Second Message

Acts 2:¹⁴ But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. ¹⁵"For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; ¹⁶ but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

A common misunderstanding occurs in the interpretation of this passage, focused specifically on verses 15 and 16. Peter presents two individual thoughts in these verses. First, he answers the allegations concerning the drunkenness of the apostles, saying they cannot be drunk because "it is only the third hour of the day." The first hour of the Jewish day began at six in the morning; therefore, the third hour began at nine in the morning. Men did not typically get drunk in the mornings in those days; they drank in excess at night. Paul supports this conclusion in his letter to the Thessalonians when he states, "For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night."¹⁴ Peter's quick common sense reply completely answers their suspicions; then he moves on to the introductory sentence of his message.

Second, Peter says, "But this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel." Most readers link Peter's introduction sentence with his answer concerning the allegation of the apostle's drunkenness, but the two thoughts do not belong together. Joel ministered for forty years from 835 BC until 795 BC in the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Jehoash. Although the good king Jehoash led the people in the ways of the Lord, many did not feel the same about the Lord and worshipped other gods. Other prophets were ministering at the same time in other parts of the land, but Joel was the first to be used by God to write a specific message to the Southern Kingdom.¹⁵ Although Joel was the first totally prophetic book written, the prophecies have yet to be fulfilled. The entire message of Joel deals with the end times and Israel's return to the Lord as her Savior.

¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:7

¹⁵ Elijah (859 BC) and Elisha (840 BC) ministered in the Northern Kingdom. Obadiah (835 BC) was the second to write the Lord message. Obadiah's message was not directed at Jews, but at their cousins the Edomites who lived south of Judah.

She will have absolutely nowhere else to turn because all the nations of the world will have turned their backs on her and she will be starving. In this passage, Peter uses the message of the oldest prophetic book, which foretells the last opportunity for an Israelite to be saved, as the beginning point of his message to the Jews that day in Jerusalem.

Joel's Prophecy

Acts 2:¹⁷ 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT UPON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; ¹⁸ EVEN UPON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE, AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BENEATH, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. ²⁰ 'THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. ²¹ 'AND IT SHALL BE, THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.' ¹⁶

Obviously, the history of the past 1980 years proves that Joel's prophecy has not been fulfilled.¹⁷ On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the followers of the Lord, but not on all mankind. Joel's prophecy that the sons, daughters, and bondslaves will prophesy has not occurred. We have not seen the wonders in the skies, nor the darkness of the sun or the moon looking like blood. John's prophecy in the book of Revelation mirrors Joel's prophecy, yet John's Revelation will not be fulfilled until the distant future.¹⁸ Joel's prophecy foretells the salvation of individual Jews before the Day of the Lord. All the Jews standing within earshot of Peter knew Joel's prophecy and Peter used it to warn them of the future if they do not repent and be saved.

The People Had Seen the Miracles of the Lord's Ministry

Acts 2:²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know ²³ this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. ²⁴ "And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

The last sentence of Joel's prophecy presented the offer to be saved by calling upon the name of the Lord. Here Peter quickly begins to draw the conclusion concerning Jesus' Lordship. The crowd knew He was the Lord and they also knew that they had participated in His death with their encouragement to crucify Him. But Peter makes two important points in this short passage. First, everything that happened to Jesus had been planned from the beginning of time. Second, death could not hold Jesus in the grave. Peter admits that the people in the crowd had participated in the death of the Lord, but he also explains to the people that it was all part of God's plan for the ages and salvation could still be theirs by calling upon His name.

¹⁶ Joel 2:28-32

¹⁷ Peter was speaking on the Day of Pentecost in AD 30. This lesson was written in AD 2010. (AD 2010 - AD 30=1980 years)

¹⁸ See Revelation Chapter 6

Returning to the Old Testament and the Words of David

Acts 2:²⁵ "For David says of Him, 'I WAS ALWAYS BEHOLDING THE LORD IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN.²⁶ 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL ABIDE IN HOPE; ²⁷ BECAUSE THOU WILT NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW THY HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. ²⁸ 'THOU HAST MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; THOU WILT MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH THY PRESENCE.' ¹⁹

In this passage David finds comfort in the Lord. He feels the presence of the Lord at his right hand to stabilize him in all his struggles. David knew that when he died, the Lord would not leave him in Hades the place of departed souls. He also knew that the Lord would not remain in the grave when He died. This interpretation would simply be subjective if we had no further proof. Further proof is found later in Acts when Paul uses this same passage from the Old Testament and clearly indicates that the Holy One in David's reference can only be the Lord Jesus.²⁰

Peter's Explanation of the David's Passage

Acts 2:²⁹ "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ "And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS UPON HIS THRONE, ^{21 31} he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. ^{22 32} "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. ³³ "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. ³⁴ "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, ³⁵ UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR THY FEET." ^{23 36} "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified."

When Peter gave his first message in the upper room concerning the replacement of Judas, his former impetuous and shortsighted attitude showed in his words. In this passage, having the Holy Spirit as his teacher, his words seem fresh, yet peaceful, bold, yet palatable, confident, yet humble. His words possess an authority never heard before. The Lord had started afresh with Peter. When Peter says, "Let me say confidently," the words convey the idea of graciously asking permission to continue with the story and interpret the words of David to them. After explaining David's words, Peter confidently finishes the body of his short message by revealing that Jesus is the Lord and the Christ.

¹⁹ Psalms 16:8-11

²⁰ Acts 13:36-38 "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you."

²¹ 2 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 132:11

²² Psalm 16:10; Psalm 110:1

²³ Psalm 110:1

Peter's Invitation to Accept to the Lord

Acts 2:³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."³⁹ For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."⁴⁰ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"⁴¹ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.⁴² And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

When Peter pauses after proclaiming that Jesus is the Lord and Christ, people in the crowd speak up, asking what they need to do next. Peter responds by inviting them to repent for the forgiveness of their sins and be baptized. They had crucified the Lord; now they can make Him their Lord. Once they make Him Lord of their hearts, the Holy Spirit will be their gift from God, just as He had been the gift to Peter and the others just an hour or so before in the upper room. Their hearts are changed that day and about 3,000 people are baptized after repenting of their sins. Christ Jesus forgave them and became their Lord. It is clear in this passage that Peter says many more things to the people as they are being baptized. He keeps the invitation open as people continue to come. He reminds them of the evil thoughts of their religious leaders and encourages them to forgo the past and embrace the Lord. Over the next few days and months the apostles instruct the new Jewish converts in all the teachings of the Lord, including the purpose of the breaking of the bread and prayer. The phrase "breaking of the bread" poses a problem in interpretation. It could mean a fellowship meal eaten together as a church, but more likely, in this sentence, it is the teaching of the meaning and purpose of the Lord's Supper, which signifies the New Covenant between God and man. In the next passage it will have a different meaning because of its context.

The Activities of the New Church

Acts 2:⁴³ And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.⁴⁴ And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common;⁴⁵ and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.⁴⁶ And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,⁴⁷ praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

²⁴ "Christ" means anointed in the New Testament. "Messiah" means anointed in the Old Testament. The word Messiah is not found in the New Testament. It is only found in Daniel 9:25-26 in the Old Testament. The word Christ is not found in the Old Testament. The two words are interchangeable because they have the same meaning; however, the words are translated into English according to the words used in the original languages.

The miracle-working power of the Lord begins anew on the Day of Pentecost and continues for many years thereafter. But we must notice carefully whom the Lord uses to perform these miracles. Luke carefully states that the miracles occur through the efforts of the apostles only. He does not state that anyone else had the ability to replicate the mighty works of the Lord. The continuing activities of the church are funded by its new converts; members are added on a daily basis, each being saved by repenting of his sin and showing the world his decision by being baptized. They help each other in the church and this activity occurs because the apostles continue the miraculous work of the Lord during their lives. Luke gives another example of this miracle-working power next.

Peter Heals the Lame Man

Acts 3:¹ Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. ² And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. ³ And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, "Look at us!" ⁵ And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarenewalk!" ⁷ And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. ⁸ And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God; ¹⁰ and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

The main focus of this passage deals with Peter's healing the lame man outside the temple gate. The encounter with the lame man happens at the gate called Beautiful. We simply do not know with certainty the location of this gate. We do know that Peter and John had approached the gate at three in the afternoon and healed the man before going into the temple. Some might wonder why Peter and John were going to the temple. Like Jesus before them, and later Paul, the apostles continue the Jewish worship of God, but not the sacrificial portions of the religion. They also go into the temple as witnesses, reasoning with the Jews, preaching the gospel message of Jesus, and inviting them to accept Him as Lord.

Peter's Third Message – His First Imprisonment

Acts 3:¹¹ And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. ¹² But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? ¹³"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. ¹⁴"But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. ¹⁶"And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. ¹⁷"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.

¹⁸"But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹"Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. ²²"Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED in everything He says to you. ²⁵ ²³'And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' ²⁴"And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. ²⁵"It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.'²⁶ ²⁶"For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways." Acts 4:¹ And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees, came upon them, ²being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The healing of the lame man stirs an excitement in the temple. Peter uses it as an opportunity to preach the basic points of his message from the Day of Pentecost to those who had not heard. In this message, Peter cites Moses' prophecy about Jesus and then adds the important point that all who reject the Lord will be destroyed. The Sadducees, who did not believe in the theology of a resurrection even though they could not deny the resurrection of the Lord in Jerusalem, had Peter and John put in jail. Their incarceration did not stop people from accepting the Lord, repenting of their sins, and being baptized. At Pentecost, about 3,000 people became followers of the Lord. By this time in Luke's study, about 5,000 men were followers, not including the women and children. The church had literally exploded within the city of Jerusalem.

²⁵ Deuteronomy 18:15

²⁶ Genesis 12:3; Genesis 18:18; Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:89