

# *Acts*

## *Lesson #2*

### *The Birth of the Church*

*(2: 1-47)*

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM

# Review

The *Gospel according to Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles* comprise two parts of a single, unified literary work. At the end of Luke's gospel, Jesus' spends forty days with his disciples, teaching them what they need to know to take the gospel message to the world on his behalf, and he commissions them as "Apostles" for that specific job.

In Lesson #1, Jesus gives his Apostles their final instructions, telling them to wait in Jerusalem "*for the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak*" (Acts 1: 4). He then ascends into heaven from the Mount of Olives.

The wait lasts ten days.

# Preview

**On the Jewish feast of Pentecost, A.D. 32—fifty days after Passover—the Holy Spirit arrives in Jerusalem—like a freight train, very publically! We read that *“suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which [the Apostles] were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them”* (Acts 2: 2-4). At the roaring sound, a large crowd gathers at the Temple area, wondering what just happened!**

# Preview, cont.

Although Acts highlights the work of Peter and Paul in the early Church's growth, the Holy Spirit is the engine driving events. As we read through the narrative, notice the pervasive presence of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost all of the Apostles *"were filled with the Holy Spirit"* (2: 4); Peter tells his listeners on the temple mount to *"repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (2: 38); when Peter addresses the Sanhedrin, he is *"filled with the Holy Spirit"* (4: 8); Peter tells Ananias that he has not lied to him, but *"to the Holy Spirit"* (5: 3); on his second appearance before the Sanhedrin, Peter affirms that *"we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit"* (5: 32); and the seven deacons chosen to assist the community are *"known to be full of the Spirit"* (6: 3). The list grows throughout the narrative. In a very real sense, *The Acts of the Apostles* could be more aptly titled *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*.

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



As we study through the entire Bible, Genesis through Revelation, each person of the Trinity plays a specific role in our story:

- 1) **God the Father** is the main character in the Hebrew Scriptures, Genesis through Malachi;
- 2) **God the Son** is the main character in the Gospels, Matthew through John; and
- 3) **God the Holy Spirit** is the main character in Acts through Revelation.

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



1) Genesis introduces **God the Father:**

*“In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth . . . the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life . . .” (1: 1, 2: 7)*

2) Luke introduces **God the Son:**

*“And the angel said to her . . . ‘The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God’” (1: 35).*

3) Acts introduces **God the Holy Spirit:**

*“And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit . . .” (2: 2-4).*

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



**In Acts 1: 4-5 we read:**

*“While meeting with them [the 11 Apostles], he [Jesus] enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for ‘the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the holy Spirit.’”*

**And that’s precisely what happens in A.D. 32 on the Jewish feast of Pentecost, 10 days after Jesus’ Ascension and 50 days after Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection during the feast of Passover.**

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



We have learned in our study of Exodus and Leviticus that God commands three “pilgrimage” festivals, three times each year when all Jews who are able gather together to celebrate three pivotal events in Israel’s covenant history with God:

- 1) **Passover**, which remembers the Exodus;
- 2) **Pentecost** (in Greek, Πεντηκοστή, “the 50<sup>th</sup> [day after Passover]”), which remembers the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai; and
- 3) **Tabernacles**, which remembers the 40 years in the wilderness.

\* In Hebrew the festivals are Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot.



**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM

## The Birth of the Church

“When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.”

(2: 1-5)



After Jesus Ascension the Apostles, “together with with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers,” were together in “the upper room where they were staying” (1: 13-14).

In the Pentecost scene of 2: 1-4, the Holy Spirit presumably descends upon the same group of people in the same upper room.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, they begin speaking in “tongues, as the spirit enabled them.”

Dies Pentecostes ⁊ advent⁹ Spirit⁹ Sancti sup̄ discipulos



**Herrad of Landsberg, “The Holy Spirit Comes upon the Disciples,”  
*Hortus Deliciarum* (manuscript illustration), c. 1185.**

*[Herrad of Landsberg, abbess of Hohenberg Abbey (c. 1167-1195), compiled the Hortus Deliciarum, a pictorial encyclopedia that included 336 illustrations. The illustrations were published between 1879 and 1899. The original manuscript was destroyed by fire in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War.]*

**Logos** BIBLE STUDY.COM



St. Paul addresses “speaking in tongues” in 1 Corinthians 14, where he insists that if a person speaks in tongues, someone should interpret what he or she is saying, since such utterance is unintelligible speech.

That is not what is happening here, for those who hear the Apostles are amazed, saying, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language?”

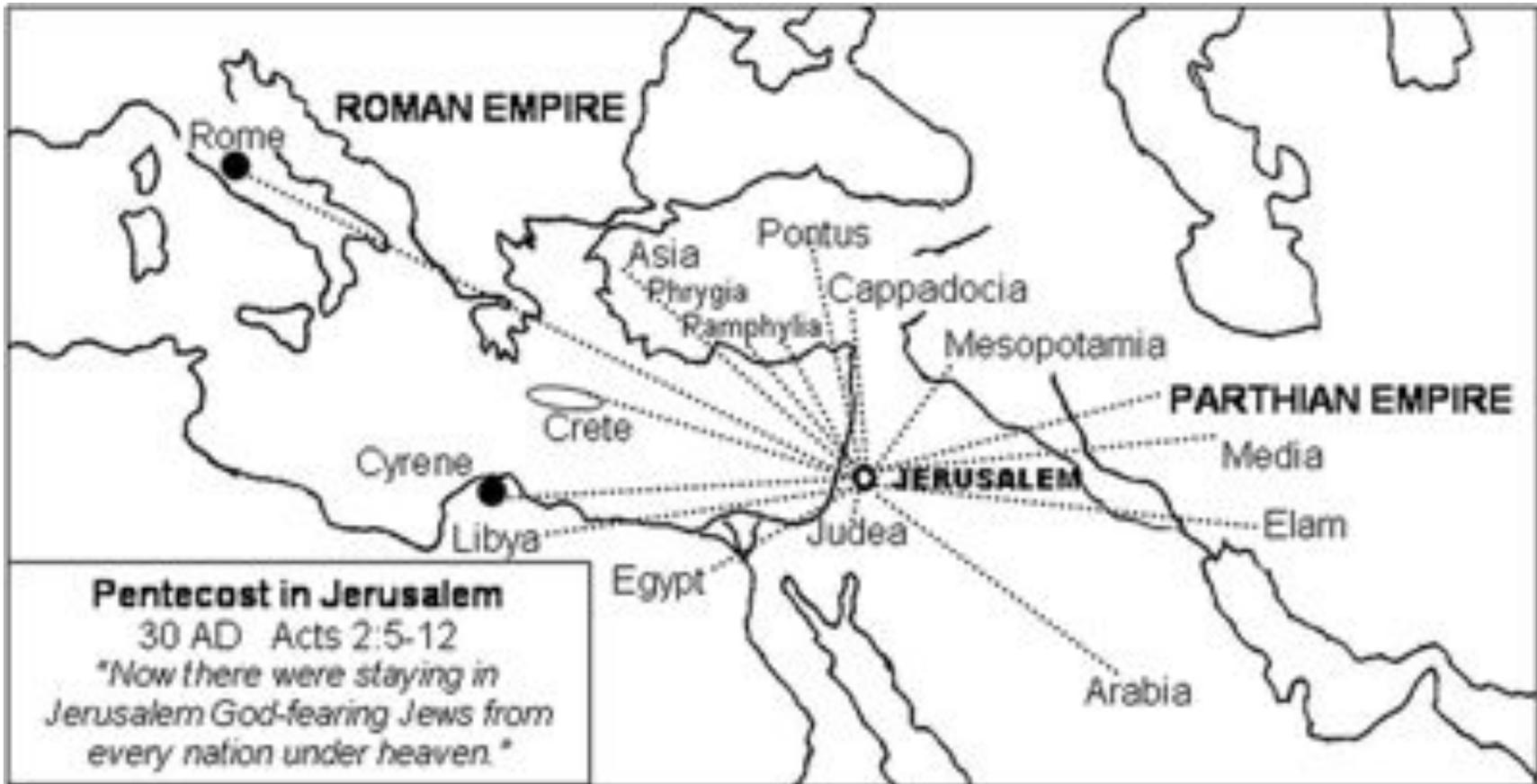
(2: 12)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM

“Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, ‘Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretins and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.’ They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others said, scoffing, ‘They have had too much wine.’”

(2: 5-13)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM





Let me get this straight: Jesus and the Apostles' native language was Aramaic, but when the Apostles "speak in tongues" others hear them in their own native language (Greek, Latin, Egyptian, and so on).  
Amazing!



I only know one language:  
barking.

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**With that, St. Peter stands up and speaks to the crowd, a crowd now numbering in the thousands. This is the man who only 50 days earlier was afraid of a servant girl in the courtyard of the high priest!**

**St. Peter's "sermon" at Pentecost consists of 5 parts:**

- 1. Announcement that the age of fulfillment has arrived (14-21)**
- 2. The account of Jesus' death and resurrection (22-28)**
- 3. The account of Jesus' exultation (29-36)**
- 4. A dramatic call to action (37-39)**
- 5. The result (40-41)**



## Peter's Pentecost "sermon" consists of 5 parts:

1. **Announcement that the age of fulfillment has arrived (14-21)**
2. The account of Jesus' death and resurrection (22-28)
3. The account of Jesus' exultation (29-36)
4. A dramatic call to action (37-39)
5. The result (40-41)



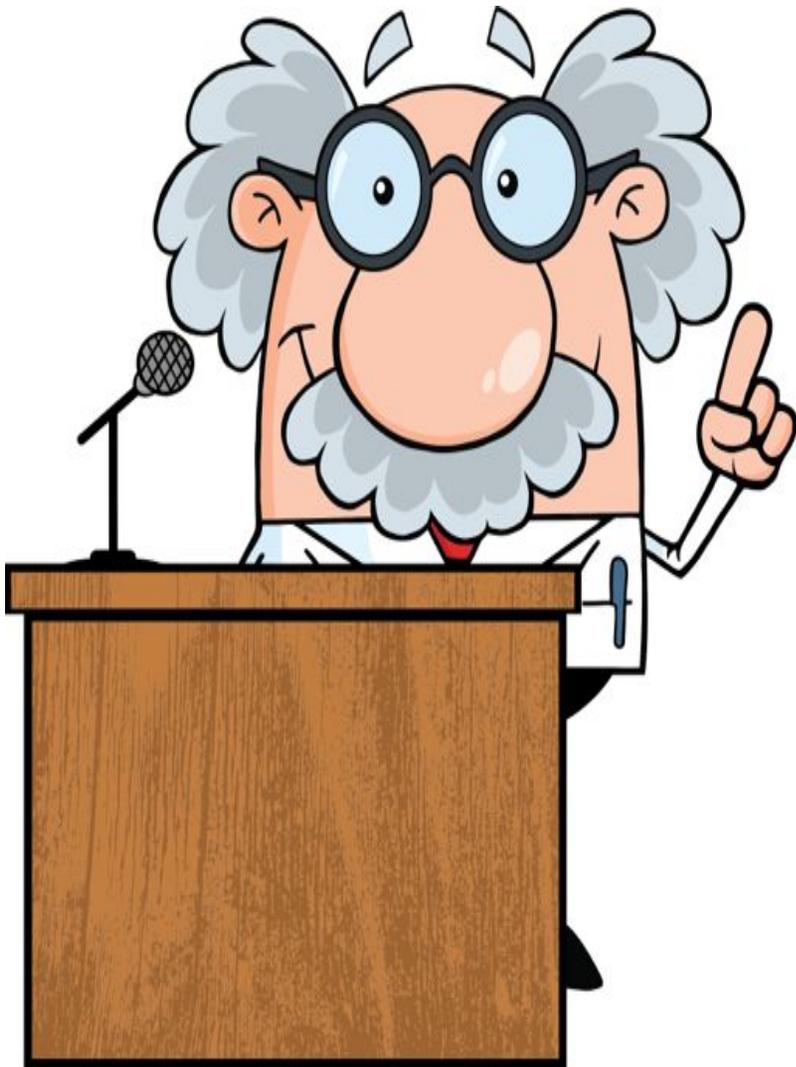
## Peter's Pentecost "sermon" consists of 5 parts:

1. Announcement that the age of fulfillment has arrived (14-21)
2. **The account of Jesus' death and resurrection (22-28)**
3. The account of Jesus' exultation (29-36)
4. A dramatic call to action (37-39)
5. The result (40-41)



## Peter's Pentecost "sermon" consists of 5 parts:

1. Announcement that the age of fulfillment has arrived (14-21)
2. The account of Jesus' death and resurrection (22-28)
3. **The account of Jesus' exultation (29-36)**
4. A dramatic call to action (37-39)
5. The result (40-41)

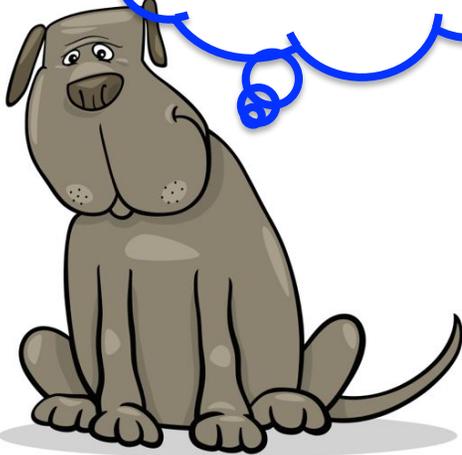


## Peter's Pentecost "sermon" consists of 5 parts:

1. Announcement that the age of fulfillment has arrived (14-21)
2. The account of Jesus' death and resurrection (22-28)
3. The account of Jesus' exultation (29-36)
4. **A dramatic call to action (37-39)**
5. The result (40-41)



If 3,000 were added to their number after Peter's "Pentecost sermon," there must have been considerably more than 3,000 who heard him speak! But I suspect there is more to it than that.



I think I know where you're going with this!

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



**Indeed, there is. Recall the first “Pentecost,” which remembers the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai, when Moses came down off the mountain with the tablets of the 10 Commandments.**

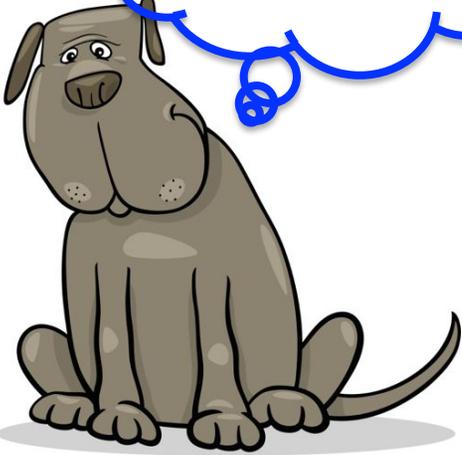
**Turn to Exodus 32: 1-28.**



Nicolas Poussin," *The Adoration of the Golden Calf* (oil on canvas), 1633.



Wow! The 1<sup>st</sup> Pentecost marks the birth of Israel as a covenant community under Law, and 3,000 people die; Acts 2 marks the birth of the Church as a covenant community under Grace, and 3,000 are saved!



That can't be accidental!

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



## Peter's Pentecost "sermon" consists of 5 parts:

1. Announcement that the age of fulfillment has arrived (14-21)
2. The account of Jesus' death and resurrection (22-28)
3. The account of Jesus' exultation (29-36)
4. A dramatic call to action (37-39)
5. **The result (40-41)**

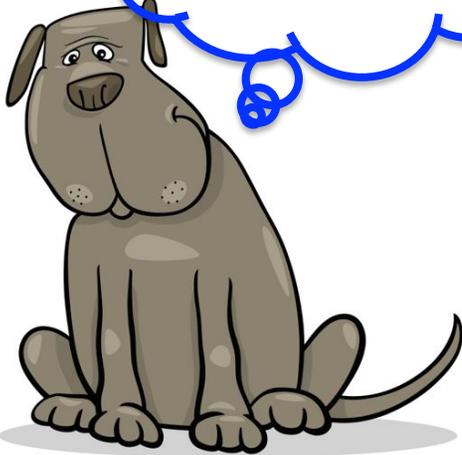
“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

(2: 42-47)

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM



Humm. Is this a description of what was happening in Jerusalem after Pentecost, or is it a prescription of how life is to be lived under the new covenant of Grace?



That's a good question!

Logos BIBLE STUDY.COM

# Questions for discussion and thought

- 1. When the Apostles “speak in tongues” after the Holy Spirit arrives, what does this mean?**
- 2. When Peter stands up and speaks to the crowd at Pentecost, what changes do we notice in his behavior and manner?**
- 3. How does Peter describe the “mighty deeds, wonders, and signs” that Jesus performed during his public ministry?**
- 4. What marks the climax of Peter’s “sermon”?**
- 5. What four elements characterize life in these early days of the Church?**

## **Copyright © 2015 by William C. Creasy**

**All rights reserved. No part of this course—audio, video, photography, maps, timelines or other media—may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage or retrieval devices without permission in writing or a licensing agreement from the copyright holder.**