

# Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

## Lesson #32 Setting The Scene For Pentecost

The charge Jesus gives His disciples following His Resurrection is the charge He gives to us as well. Luke 24:44-49 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and remission of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things And, behold, I send the promise of my Father [Holy Spirit] upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

The first thing Jesus does is remind them of the words He has already spoken. He starts not with sharing anything new, but that which is from the beginning, how everything written in the Law, Prophets and Psalms about His 1<sup>st</sup> coming has been fulfilled. Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. He has done everything that was required of him. He confirms that the entire Old Testament finds its "Yes and Amen" in Christ Jesus. He then commissions them to go and share this knowledge with the entire world. Jesus said he suffered and was raised on the third day so that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations.

Matt. 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

This is the task of the church. We must be faithful to proclaim the message of the gospel.

Acts tells how His church began in Jerusalem and spread to the ends of the earth.

1. Acts 1:1 links it with Luke's Gospel. Both were written to Theophilus. Luke & Acts comprise about 30% of the New Testament, surpassing both Paul & John in size.
2. Acts is a vital link between the Gospels and New Testament epistles.

The Gospels	Acts	Epistles
End In Jerusalem With No Church	BRIDGES The GAP	Directed To Churches Throughout Roman World
Gospel Is Mainly Given To The Jews		Churches Are Filled With Gentile Believers
Ends In Jerusalem		Ends In Rome

3. How did the Christian faith that began with a few followers of Jesus in Israel spread to Rome and points beyond?
4. Acts actually describes the acts of Jesus through the Holy Spirit in His servants.

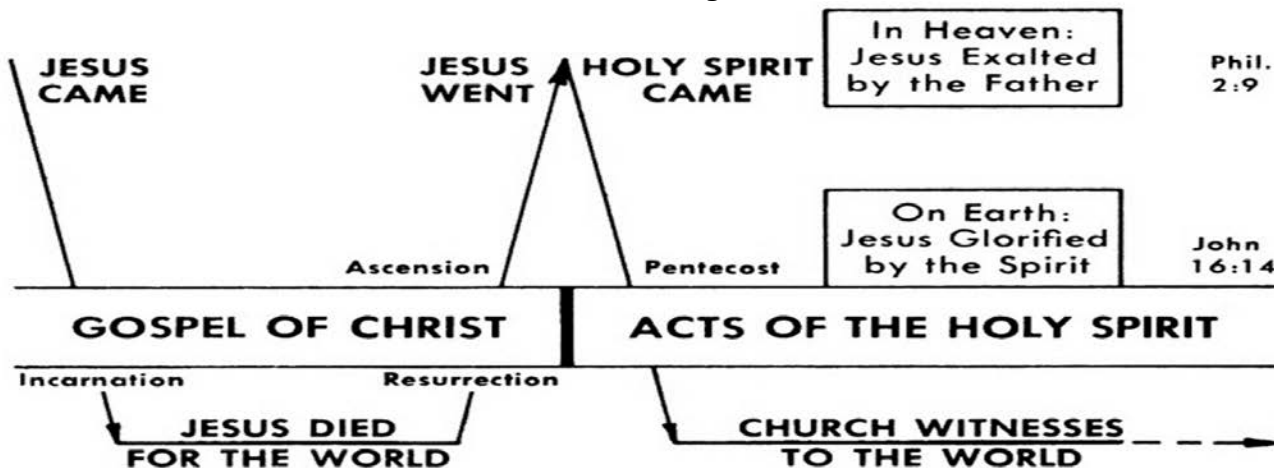
5. Acts shows how God went from working primarily with the Jews as a nation to working with the church, comprised of Jews and Gentiles on equal footing.
6. Acts shows the transition that lasted from the death of Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD which fulfilled Jesus' prophecy.
7. Acts records many miraculous signs that were given to prove to Israel that they had been wrong to reject Jesus as their Messiah and Lord.
8. The main message that the apostles and others in Acts proclaimed centered on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This was the primary sign authenticating Jesus as the Christ, and on the offer of forgiveness of sins in His name.
9. The apostles were given unusual miraculous power, authenticating them as God's witnesses to Jesus Christ and His resurrection.
10. God had a special purpose in this transitional time: To authenticate the apostles within this transition period.

Acts 2 must be interpreted in light of Acts 1:1-8.

Acts 1:1-3 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, <sup>2</sup> Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

What Jesus Christ began to do and teach:

1. Christ's work was to bring salvation to a lost human race.
2. Purpose of the Power: By the power of the Holy Spirit the church is obediently to continue to do and teach what Jesus began.



Ray Stedman: God uses incarnation - His life manifested through human life - as His strategy to change the world. Acts is a record of men and women possessed by Jesus Christ and manifesting His life every day under the control of the Holy Spirit. Anytime you find a "Christianity" that is not doing this, it is a false Christianity.

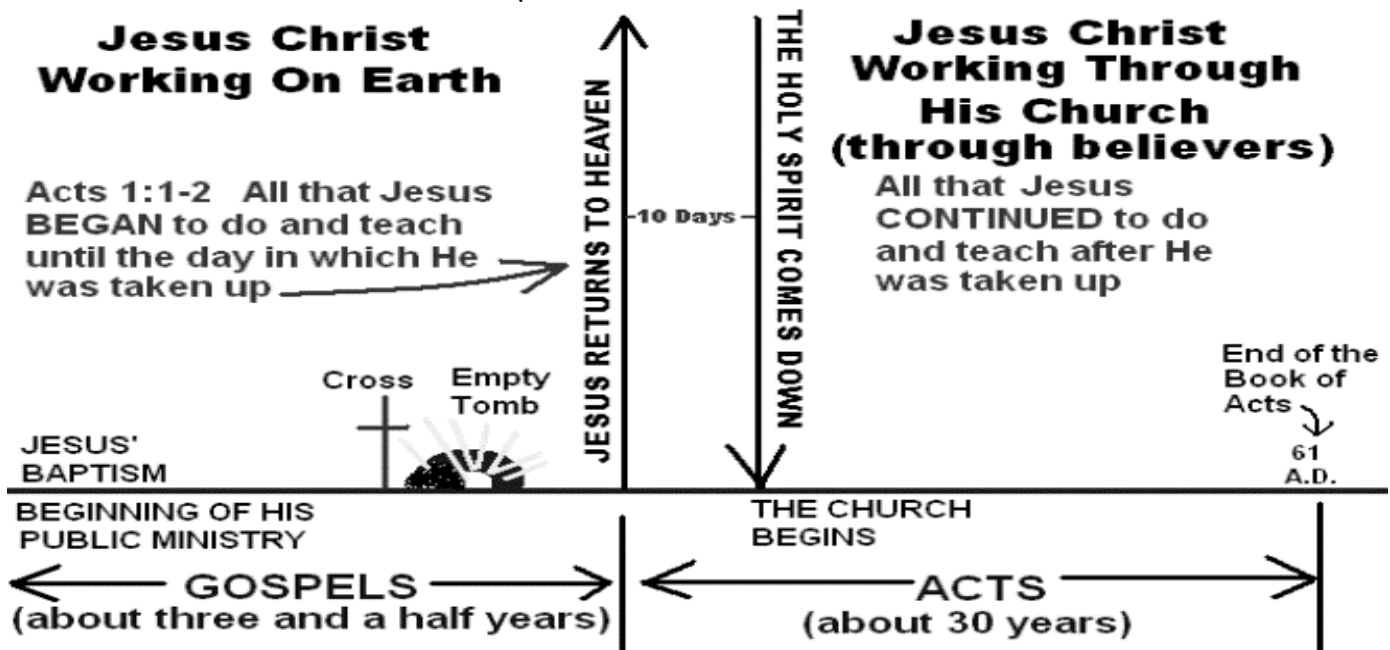
Acts makes it clear that the apostles and early church were instruments through whom the Lord was working His purpose and plan.

- Note how the narrative of Acts picks up and then drops various men according to the degree which they are for the moment the instrument of Christ's power.
  - Peter, the most prominent, slips out of the narrative without a word after Acts 15.
  - James is mentioned only in 1:13 and in 12:2 when he is martyred.
  - John is only referred to in the first 4 chapters, once in chapter 8, then in reference to his brother's martyrdom and he passes from the scene in Acts.
  - Barnabas, who pioneers the first Gentile church in Antioch and goes with Paul on his 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey, slips into oblivion after Acts 15.
  - Paul, who dominates the last half of the book, is left in Rome in prison with no information of his subsequent work or martyrdom.

People have been puzzled over the somewhat abrupt ending. Perhaps Luke intended for the book to be viewed as an unfinished story. The followers of Jesus throughout the centuries are writing the remainder...

G. Campbell Morgan: Acts is not a merely mechanical story of the journeys of Paul or the doings of Peter. It is intended to reveal the process through which Christ proceeds in new power, consequent upon the things He began to do and teach, toward the ultimate and final victory, found in Revelation.

- Christ continues His work through: Chosen Men ; Obedient Men; Spirit-filled Men; Men with confidence in the power of God's Word.



The Risen Lord Jesus instructs His disciples to wait. Just as the ministry of Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit descending on Him at His baptism, so the ministry of the disciples depended on them receiving the Holy Spirit and RELYING on His power. He was coming to dwell in them permanently.

Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but WAIT for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

- Do not leave Jerusalem Wait For The Promise Of The Father
- Tarry in Jerusalem Until You Are Endued With Power From On High

Acts 1:5 but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

- The Task: Proclaim the Gospel; Be Witnesses; Begin in Jerusalem...uttermost part of the earth
- The Means: The Power Of the Holy Spirit
- Command: Tarry Until You Are Endued With The Power From On High Which Is The Promise Of God The Father

Acts 2 is a special historical event, signifying a new period in God's dealings with His people. Pentecost signals the dawning of the age of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the Holy Spirit in God's people to empower them for witness to all the nations.

Conclusion: The meaning of Pentecost is God's equipping His Church with the power of His Spirit so He will be glorified among the nations.

1. The point of Pentecost is God's mission. The goal of the mission is:

Hab. 2:14 The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord...

If we properly understand this great historic event, our hearts will be enflamed with the cause of seeing people from every tribe, tongue and nation bowing before the exalted Lord Jesus Christ.

#### 4 Key Points Regarding Pentecost

##### A. God's Plan For Being Glorified Among The Nations Was To Form The Church

1. It was not by coincidence that God poured out His Spirit on the disciples that day.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come... [was being accomplished]

Greek- English lexicon: To arrive as the timely moment for an event to take place

- It happened on Pentecost to FULFILL its eternally determined destiny. Pentecost is the sovereign activity of God; the day He purposed to fulfill His promise of the Spirit.
  - It is a key event depicted early in Acts which sets the stage for what follows.
  - The ministry of Jesus through the church in Acts is the outflow of the descent of the Spirit.
2. Pentecost was an initial harvest feast. The Jews were to offer to the Lord the first fruits of the new grain, wheat.
  3. They were to wave two loaves of wheat bread made with leaven before the Lord.  
[Lev. 23:15-21]
    - This picture came to fulfillment in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.
    - Until this time, the Lord's people consisted of Israel, along with a few Gentile proselytes.
    - Now the Lord formed the body of Christ, the church, made up of Jews and Gentiles on equal footing.

- Waved 2 equal loaves of wheat bread with leaven. [type of sin]
  - Although we are redeemed in Christ, we still battle sin and the flesh.
4. Matt. 16:18 Jesus told Peter that He, Jesus, would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

The Church was founded on the apostolic confession and witness that: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. [Matt. 16:16]. This is God's means of taking the gospel to all the nations, resulting in His being glorified in all the earth.

### B. The Scope Of God's Plan Is All The Nations

Acts 2:9-11 <sup>9</sup> Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

<sup>11</sup> Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

1. Parthians, Medes, and Elamites traveled from what is present-day Iran. At the time of Acts, they would have been parts of the Parthian Empire.
2. Mesopotamia incorporated what is modern-day Iraq, Kuwait, and Western Syria around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. At the time of Acts, it was a Roman province.
3. Judea was the area around Jerusalem and what we would call "the Holy Land", which encompasses modern-day Israel and Palestine. It was a Roman Province at the time,
4. Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia were all Roman provinces, located in present-day Turkey
5. Egypt was another Roman province at the time.
6. Libya was not a Roman Province. At the time of the first Pentecost, modern-day Libya was divided into three provinces under Roman rule:
7. Cretans were from the island of Crete, in the Mediterranean, now part of Greece.
8. Arabs would have been from the Arabian Peninsula. At the time of Acts, there would have been Jewish communities there, particularly in trading cities like Mecca and Medina.



Pentecost marked the beginning of the spread of the Gospel to the whole world.

Acts 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

- ❖ List represents men from every nation who were devout or God-fearing men.
- ❖ Had made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the feast.
- ❖ They did not yet know their Messiah had come and had been sacrificed.
- ❖ Peter explains all this shortly in his sermon.

Consider: List of the nations reminds us of the list of nations in Gen. 10 which led to the Tower of Babel. Pentecost seems to be a picture of the Tower of Babel reversed

1. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost in Acts 2, the believers that the tongues of fire rested on began to speak in other languages.

Acts 2:5-41 "God fearing Jews from every nation under heaven, heard the disciples speaking and declaring the wonder of God in their own native tongue or language. This was such a powerful and miraculous event that 3000 people believed in Jesus as Messiah and were baptized.

Recall: Pentecost was a harvest feast when the Jews were to offer to the Lord the first fruits of the new grain, wheat. These 3000 souls were the first fruits at the formation of the Church. A greater harvest would be coming.

2. Up until the time of Gen. 11, the whole world had one language and a common speech.
3. However, the people unified under a common, but sinful and egotistical purpose to build a staircase to God and worship the gods of the heavens.

Gen. 11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

4. God judged those proud men by confusing their common language so they couldn't understand one another.
5. He also forced them to scatter all over the earth which formed the nations.
6. At Pentecost, He reversed this incident from 2500 years earlier.
7. He brought the scattered nations that had different tongues, languages, and dialects.
8. God in His grace turned the confusion of tongues, languages, into a miracle of miraculous speech which resulted in great blessing. He brought them back together so they could understand each other.
9. They came together and were unified for the correct reason: to praise and exalt the God of the Universe.
10. The gift of speaking in tongues, other languages, was a special miracle to demonstrate God's purpose in taking the gospel to all nations.
11. It enabled the church to be launched in all these places when these men returned home.

Note: Later in Acts 14:11-14, even Paul & Barnabas did not understand the Lycaonian dialect. They could only preach in Greek.

The Point: God's plan is no longer to be bottled up with the Jews. His Gospel is for all nations.

Rev. 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

C. The Goal Of God's Plan: He Will Be Glorified Among The Nations

Acts 2:11 These Jews from all of these nations heard the disciples "speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

1. Peter will then preach the gospel which leads to the conversion of 3000 souls.

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

D. The Necessary Power To Fulfill God's Plan: His Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity.

➤ Jesus calls Him the Paraclete, one called alongside to help; the Comforter

➤ Eph. 4:30 A personal being that can be grieved

Important Points: 1. Before the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit regenerated men and empowered them for serving God. But He did not permanently indwell all believers.

[Ps. 51:11; Luke 11:13]

2. Upper Room: Jesus told the disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them forever. John 14:16-17: "You know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."
3. The Day Of Pentecost: Acts 1:5: The disciples would be baptized with the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of Jesus' promise.
4. Acts 8: The Spirit was poured out on the Samaritans through the apostles, so that both the Samaritans and the apostles would realize they were now members of the same body of Christ.
5. Acts 10: The same thing happened with the Gentiles and the followers of John's baptism in Ephesus. [Acts 19].
6. These transitional outpourings of the Holy Spirit follow the pattern of Acts 1:8.
7. Once the transition was completed, all that believe in Christ receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. [Gal. 3:2-5]

Rom. 8:9 "You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him."

Distinguish several terms that are often confused: Baptism of Holy Spirit versus Filled

Acts 1:5 but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. [Day of Pentecost]

1. Baptism = being totally identified with the Spirit and to the initial reception of the Spirit.

I Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Consider: "If the baptism of the Spirit were a special experience for the 'spiritually elite,' Paul would not have said this to the Corinthians, who were noted for their spiritual immaturity."



- There is no command to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is not an experience to seek, but it is God's action performed on every believer at the moment of salvation.
  - The command is to be FILLED with the Spirit which means to be controlled by the Spirit. [Eph. 5:18]
2. The disciples on the Day of Pentecost were not only baptized with the Spirit, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. [Acts 2:4]
  3. Baptism is a one-time event. Being filled with the Spirit happens repeatedly. [Acts 4:8, 31; Acts 6:5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9]
  4. To be filled with the Spirit, we must empty ourselves by confessing all known sin and by dying to self, "the old man," the flesh. We must yield ourselves fully to the Lord and depend on Him by "walking in the Spirit."

Gal. 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.  
 Filled with the Spirit: Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;

## 2 Key Truths:

1. Christianity is a faith rooted in history
  - Christianity is God's revelation of Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.
  - The apostles faithfully handed down what they had seen and heard concerning the life, death, resurrection and teaching of Jesus Christ.
  - Our faith is built on "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Himself being the cornerstone." [Eph. 2:20]
  - Therefore, we can have confidence about our faith.
2. God is at work in history through His church.
  - God didn't send Christ, pull Him off the planet and stop working.
  - Jesus began the work and His work continues through His Church.

Question: Am I committed to God's work through His church?

- Do you see yourself primarily as the servant of Jesus Christ, fully committed and obedient to His cause?
- If you are a born-again Christian, serving the Lord in His cause through His church is not optional.
- By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to obediently continue to do and teach what our Lord Jesus Christ began.

Truth: The filling of the Spirit cannot be divorced from God's Word being at home in your heart.

- The result of a consistent daily walk in the Spirit will be the fruit of the Spirit being produced and manifested in our lives and relationships. [Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:19-6:9]