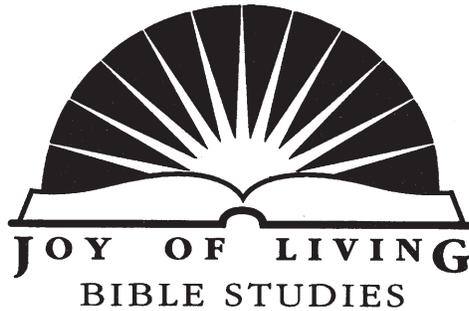


## Acts Lesson 2



### **Acts 1:1—2:4 — An Unfinished Book**

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The book of Acts begins with Jesus being taken up into heaven, and it ends with Paul in Rome, under house arrest while awaiting trial before Caesar. As you read the final chapter, it seems you should be able to turn the page and read the rest of Paul's adventure—but no, the book is ended, the story tantalizingly unfinished.

Indeed, Acts is an unfinished book. The story that began in the Gospels and continued in Acts is still being written to this day, to this hour. What we call the book of Acts was volume 1—the record of the Acts of God in the first century A.D. In every century, God, through His church, has written another volume of Acts. As this book goes to press, God is in the midst of writing volume 21, the acts of God in the twenty-first century A.D. It may be the final volume. God alone knows.

The events recorded in the book of Acts continue to shape history to this present day. The first of these historic elements is the resurrection of Jesus: *Please read Acts 1:3-4.* Notice that Luke stresses the great and central fact of Christian faith: Jesus is alive. The founder of every other religion on earth has died and turned to dust. But the founder of Christianity came out of the tomb and is alive today.

Luke says that after Jesus was crucified, He gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. Luke lists three categories of proof.

First, Luke says, "He appeared to them over a period of forty days" (Acts 1:3). The disciples saw Jesus again and again, not once but many times, and it was clear that His appearance before them was not a hallucination.

Second, Luke says, the risen Lord Jesus "spoke about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). The disciples clearly remembered His subject matter when

He spoke to them: He talked about the kingdom of God. First the disciples saw Him; then they heard Him. Two objective sensory experiences confirmed that the resurrection was no illusion.

Third, Luke says, Jesus “was eating with them” (Acts 1:4). The disciples saw Him eat. They shared meals with Him and saw Him put food in His mouth, chew it, and swallow it. This is the proof, Luke says: He ate with us, so we know He is alive.

The Christian faith rests on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. Hundreds of eyewitnesses saw Him, heard Him, and ate with Him—and many went to a martyr’s death, confident that they would be raised just as they had seen Jesus raised.

## The Promise of the Father

The next historical fact Luke brings to our attention is the promise of God the Father. *Please read Acts 1:4-8.* The disciples were still looking for Jesus to establish a political kingdom in Israel. But Jesus told them that the sovereign God does not reveal His timetable. God would baptize them with the Holy Spirit.

“Do not leave Jerusalem,” Jesus said to the Eleven (the Twelve, minus the traitor Judas). The disciples were to stick around and wait for the promise of the Father to come upon them. God was commissioning them to be His witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This was a big task, and they would make a hopeless mess of it if they tried to witness in their own human strength. They needed the life and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The same holds true for you and me. We cannot be effective Christians if we do not operate in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our human flesh only gets in the way of God’s message. Like those first-century disciples, we need the indwelling presence of the Spirit in our lives.

Notice the contrast Jesus draws between John’s baptism and the baptism of the Spirit. John baptized with water; in other words, his baptism was a symbol, a foreshadowing of a coming reality. But the Spirit’s coming would not be a ritual; it would be the fulfillment of the Father’s promise. So Jesus told the disciples, “Wait for the gift my Father promised.”

When did God the Father make that promise? He made that promise to

## Acts Lesson 2

Abraham two thousand years before Jesus came to earth: *Please read Genesis 12:2-3*. God told Abraham that He would bless him, make his name great, and bless all nations through him. God did not tell Abraham what form that blessing would take, but in Galatians, Paul explains God's promise of blessing through Abraham: *Please read Galatians 3:13-14*. The promise God made to Abraham was that his spiritual descendents—believing Jews and believing Gentiles—would receive the Holy Spirit. Does this mean that no one received the Holy Spirit until the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit descended on the disciples? The fact is, before the day of Pentecost, no Gentile ever received the Holy Spirit unless he first became a part of Israel.

In the Old Testament, there are several accounts of people who were filled with the Spirit in Israel. We know that Abraham was filled with the Spirit because God promised, "I will bless you," and that blessing, Paul says, is the promise of the Spirit. Moses, Joshua, David, many of the kings of Judah, and all of the prophets received the Spirit because Peter tells us that when the prophets predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow,

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they spoke by "the Spirit of Christ in them" (1 Peter 1:11). They were filled with the Spirit and spoke according to the Spirit.

Yet these Old Testament believers had an incomplete and partial understanding of the Spirit who came upon them. They experienced the Spirit-filled life by means of shadows and symbols. We find symbolic depictions of the Spirit throughout the Old Testament: Aaron's rod that budded, which was kept in the Ark of the Covenant (see Numbers 17), and the seven-branched candlestick in the tabernacle (see Exodus 25:31-40) are pictures of the Holy Spirit illuminating the mind and heart. The widow's jar of oil that continued to pour out oil until every available jar was filled was a picture of the endless flow of the Spirit in our lives (see 2 Kings 4:1-7).

The oil that poured from the two olive trees into the bowl of the golden lampstand is a picture of the Holy Spirit (see Zechariah 4). Ezekiel's river flowing from the temple (see Ezekiel 47:1-12) and the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God (see Revelation 22:1-5) are pictures of the overflowing, Spirit-filled life.

The last symbolic picture of the promise of God was John's baptism.

In his gospel, Luke tells us that John was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth (see Luke 1:15). John experienced the indwelling Spirit, but he could only teach about the Spirit through the ritual of baptism.

In Acts 1, the risen Lord tells His disciples in Jerusalem there will be no more shadows, for the reality is at hand. When the Holy Spirit comes, all believers will live their lives on this new level. Jesus had once told His disciples, “The Spirit of truth...lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:17). He was telling them that the Spirit was already with them (alongside them) but did not yet dwell in them. On the day of Pentecost, that would change—and the filling of the Spirit would be available to Jews and Gentiles.

The Holy Spirit is given to us immediately when we believe in Jesus. There may not be any sign or emotional sensation when the Spirit is given to us, but it occurs nonetheless. That is the promise of Jesus.

## **The Mistake of the Church**

Next, we see that the Spirit has come to bring us power, not a program. The disciples said to Him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom

to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). They wanted to understand His political program for Israel. But Jesus replied, in effect, “Don’t concern yourself with God’s timetable—that’s all under His sovereign authority. Your task is to manifest His power. The Father will take care of the schedule.”

Here we see the great mistake of the church. We think it’s our job to set up programs to carry out the work of God. But Jesus says we should focus on His power, not on a program. The Lord’s promise to us is the same today as it was in Acts 1: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.”

What kind of power do we receive? Resurrection power. We tend to think of power as something that dazzles, explodes, and electrifies. But the power of the risen Lord is a different kind of power. It is not demonstrative or spectacular; it is quiet power.

Resurrection power is irresistible and unstoppable. Every obstacle thrown in its path only advances the gospel even further. Resurrection power changes lives from within. It doesn’t destroy; it heals. It doesn’t divide; it harmonizes. It breaks down “the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14)

between humanity and God. That is the power we receive through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says, “You will be my witnesses.” He doesn’t say we will be His propagandists or His salesmen. We will be His witnesses. We are not to go out and recruit people into our religious club or peddle a religious product. When we do that, the church becomes powerless and ineffective. He calls us to be His witnesses, and that means we tell people what Jesus has done in our lives.

The mark of a false church is that it loves to talk about itself. The early Christians never witnessed about the church. They witnessed about the amazing change Jesus made in human hearts. God did not promise us a program. He promised us power—the power of the Spirit who indwells us through faith in the risen Lord.

The promise of the Father is not restricted to one point in time and space. It is universal. It begins in Jerusalem and then goes out into Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. It is all-inclusive, encompassing all places, races, and ages.

## The Hope of the Lord’s Return

Next, Luke stresses the hope of Christ’s return. After Jesus promises that the disciples will receive the Spirit and become witnesses, something amazing happens: *Please read Acts 1:9-11*. As the disciples stood with Jesus on the Mount of Olives, outside of Jerusalem, they saw him ascend into a cloud—and they never saw Him again. Jesus had told them, “It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7). Jesus makes His life intimately available to us by means of the Spirit.

Where did Jesus go? Not to some far planet or distant galaxy. I think it’s a mistake to think of heaven as a place beyond the clouds, somewhere in space. I’m convinced that Jesus stepped into a different dimension of existence—into the invisible spiritual kingdom that surrounds us on every side. He is not far away—and He has left us His Spirit, by whom Jesus continues to live through us.

Though Jesus has left, His return is certain. “Men of Galilee,” the angels said, “why do you stand here looking

into the sky? This same Jesus...will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Just as He stepped into invisibility, He will one day step back into visibility.

Then, Luke reveals to us one more essential element in God’s plan for the early Christians—and for you and me: prayer. *Please read Acts 1:12-14.* The disciples returned to Jerusalem and waited, but they didn’t wait passively. They acted through prayer. Though deprived of the physical presence of Jesus, they were not cut off from God. The Spirit was not yet given, so they didn’t possess His indwelling life, but they were still linked to the Father by prayer. They gave themselves to prayer, awaiting the full revelation God intended to give them. Prayer is a crucial ingredient in the Father’s strategy for touching and changing the world.

## **The Body and the Building**

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he uses two symbols to help us understand the true nature of the church: a body and a building.

First, Paul writes that God appointed Jesus “to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in

every way” (Ephesians 1:22b-23). So the church is the living body of Jesus Christ on earth.

Second, Paul writes that Christians are “members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:19b-21). So the church is also a building inhabited by the Lord.

In Acts 1:15-26, the foundation is laid for the building; in Acts 2:1-4 we will see the birth of the body.

Let’s put the scene we will find in Acts 1:15 into context. In Acts 1:1-14 Luke tells us that Jesus ascended to heaven and left the disciples at the Mount of Olives, near the village of Bethany, a short distance from Jerusalem. After His ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem. As we piece the accounts together, we see that the next passage in Acts 1:15-16 undoubtedly takes place in the temple courts, since Luke has told us that the disciples were “continually at the temple” after they returned to Jerusalem (see Luke 24:51-53).

Because Acts 1:13 says that the disciples “went upstairs to the room where they were staying,” many people assume that the Holy Spirit later came upon the disciples in the upper room, the place where Jesus served the Passover to the Twelve on the night He was betrayed. That’s unlikely. We will later see that 120 people were present at Pentecost—too large a crowd for one small upper room.

So as we link the end of Luke’s gospel with Acts 1:15-16, it’s clear that the events we are about to examine must have occurred in the courts of the great temple in Jerusalem, probably in Solomon’s Porch, the majestic colonnade on the eastern side of the temple. With that setting in mind: *Please read Acts 1:15-19.*

Peter speaks of the need to replace Judas, who fell from his place as an apostle by betraying the Lord Jesus. We saw in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians that the church is like a building that is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20). So it’s not surprising that the broken fellowship of apostles must be mended. They were the Twelve; now

there are eleven. The original number must be restored.

The number twelve is significant in Scripture. In Revelation 21, John sees the magnificent shining city of God coming down out of heaven. There is a wall around the city, with twelve gates. On each gate is the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The wall also has twelve foundations, and each foundation bears the name of one of the apostles of the Lamb. So there must be twelve apostles.

Some scholars have suggested that Paul should be counted as one of the Twelve, but Paul never makes that claim. Though he was a genuine apostle, he was not one of the Twelve.

Also in this passage, we see that Luke inserts a parenthetical passage about the tragic end of Judas Iscariot. What does Luke mean when he says that Judas bought a field with the reward for his wickedness? He couldn’t have purchased land with the thirty silver coins he was paid for betraying Jesus. After Jesus was arrested, Matthew tells us, Judas “was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. ‘I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood.’...Judas threw

the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:3-5).

How, then, did Judas buy the field? We know that Jesus appointed Judas as treasurer for the disciples, and John tells us that Judas "was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it" (John 12:6). What did Judas do with the stolen money? Judas apparently believed that the coming Messiah would overthrow the Roman oppressor and establish a political kingdom. Judas was feathering his nest in anticipation of Jesus becoming king of Israel. A power-hungry embezzler, Judas had chosen a plot of land for his mansion when he became one of the King's right-hand men. He may have been making installment payments from the money he stole.

After betraying Jesus to the soldiers, Judas realized the horrible thing he had done. He returned the blood money to the priests, then went to the property he had purchased and hanged himself there. Perhaps his weight broke the tree limb so that he fell, splitting his body open. In any case, Luke records that Judas "fell headlong, his body

burst open and all his intestines spilled out" (Acts 1:18).

When Judas was found dead, the priests used the silver to pay off the property Judas was purchasing. They bought it from a potter (see Matthew 27:7), fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 11:12-13. Because this potter's field was the site of the suicide of Judas, it was also called the Field of Blood (Acts 1:19).

## **The Scriptures Fulfilled**

Peter quotes from Psalms 69:25 and 109:8 to show that the Scriptures had predicted that the traitorous apostle would be replaced. *Please read Acts 1:20.* Peter's words give us a clue as to what the disciples were doing during the ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, as they waited for the Holy Spirit: They were studying the Scriptures. And there, in the Psalms, they discovered the prophecy that a replacement must be found for the traitor, Judas.

So Peter announced that they must replace Judas in the apostolic band. He also stated the qualifications of a genuine apostle: *Please read Acts 1:21-22.* Here we see two qualifications for an apostle. First, the new twelfth apostle

had to have been with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. There were a number of people who met this qualification. Though Jesus chose the Twelve to be in a special relationship with Him, there were scores of other disciples who also accompanied Him on His journeys. Second, the new apostle had to have witnessed the Lord's appearances after the resurrection.

The requirements underscored the truth that our faith is not based on myths or legends but upon historically verified facts. So the new apostle had to be a man who had heard Jesus teach and who could bear witness that these claims were true.

## **The Threefold Task of the Apostles**

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The apostles used an interesting means to choose the replacement for Judas: *Please read Acts 1:23-26*. The decision was made in the Old Testament way: They cast lots, which is much like flipping a coin or tossing dice. This is not to say that the disciples made the decision in a casino atmosphere. The casting of lots is a dignified ritual that recognizes that God is present in even the smallest details. The Old Testament tells us, "The lot is cast into the

lap, but its every decision is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33).

Why did the disciples cast lots? Because the two candidates, Joseph and Matthias, were equally qualified—but there was room for only one apostle in the apostolic band. Since it was humanly impossible to judge between the two, the casting of lots was the chosen means of making the decision. The lot fell to Matthias, and he became the twelfth apostle. The foundation was laid. The apostles were in place and were sent forth by the Lord with a threefold task.

First, the apostles were sent out as pioneers, going where the name of Jesus had never been named in order to plant churches. All twelve apostles fulfilled this task. Church history tells us that Thomas went to India, Peter to Europe, and others to North Africa and elsewhere. These pioneers laid the groundwork for the church.

Second, they were sent out as proclaimers. The apostles uttered the message God had given them. Hours before going to the cross, Jesus told His disciples, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear" (John 16:12). During His earthly ministry Jesus never revealed these fur-

ther things to them—but these matters were revealed to them when the Holy Spirit came and taught the apostles the thoughts of God. That’s why the apostles spoke with authority. As Paul wrote, “When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe” (1 Thesalonians 2:13b).

Third, they were sent out as patterns. The apostles were intended to be examples of how the Spirit of God operates through human beings—how He transforms people and fills them with His newness of life. The apostles did not live on some level far above us. They lived on the same level as we do, and we are to live as they did.

In these three ways—as pioneers, proclaimers, and patterns—the apostles formed the foundation upon which the structure of the Lord’s church was built.

## **The Birth of the Body**

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As we turn to Acts 2, the metaphor changes. The church is depicted not as a building but as a body, and we witness the birth of the body of Jesus Christ: *Please read Acts 2:1-4.* This passage

of Scripture, so often misunderstood, requires careful examination.

This event occurred on the day of Pentecost. The Greek word *pentekoste* means “fiftieth day.” The day of Pentecost occurred fifty days after the Passover feast. It was a Jewish feast day called the Feast of Weeks (see Exodus 34:22). It was so called because a week of weeks (seven times seven or forty-nine days) were to be numbered from the Passover. After forty-nine days had passed, the Jews were to celebrate the Feast of Weeks on the fiftieth day.

This feast was also called the Feast of the Wave Loaves (see Leviticus 23:15-17). Pentecost came at the end of the wheat harvest in Israel, and the Jews were to take this new, freshly harvested wheat—the first fruit of the harvest—and bake two loaves. These loaves symbolized the two bodies from which the church would be formed: the Jews and the Gentiles. Jesus said He came first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel—the Jews (see Matthew 15:22-28). But He also said, referring to the Gentiles, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

On the day of Pentecost, God brought the Jews and Gentiles together and baptized them into one body.

There is another beautiful symbol embedded in this event. The two loaves of the Feast of Weeks were to be baked with yeast. Yeast is a symbol of sin. The wave loaves were the only sacrifice in all the Old Testament that ever included yeast. Why? Through the symbol of those leavened loaves (made with yeast), God was telling us that the church is not made out of perfect people. It is made up of imperfect people—saints who still battle the old sin nature.

In that beautiful symbolism we glimpse the heart of the church. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on 120 people who were gathered in one place, and the Spirit made them one. They were baptized by the Spirit into one body. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not necessarily associated with tongues, or fire, or wind. These were incidentals.<sup>1</sup> The essence of the baptism of the Spirit is that

the many become one. That day was the birthday of the church.

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1. Some Christian traditions may disagree with Pastor Stedman's teaching regarding this issue. You will need to be guided by Scripture and by your own church's position on these matters.

## Study Questions

### Before you begin your study this week:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

### First Day: Read the Commentary on Acts 1:1—2:4.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the commentary on Acts 1:1—2:4 or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?
  
2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down, carry it with you, tack it to your bulletin board, on the dashboard of your car, etc. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

### Second Day: Read Acts 2:5-21, concentrating on verse 5.<sup>1</sup>

1. What kind of people were staying in Jerusalem, according to Acts 2:5?

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1. The questions on this week’s passage are based on the interpretation found in the Lesson 3 commentary by Ray Stedman. Some Christian traditions may disagree with this interpretation regarding tongues and the baptism of the Spirit. You will need to be guided by Scripture and your own church’s position on these matters.

2. Challenge: In the past, many Jews had been dispersed from Israel into other nations. What do you learn about this in the following passages?

2 Kings 17:1-8

2 Kings 24:8-14

3. Thousands of devout Jews had gathered in Jerusalem from around the world to celebrate this holy event, the Feast of Weeks. Read Deuteronomy 16:16-17. Why did they make the effort to come to Jerusalem at this time?

4. a. Read Matthew 24:14. To whom did Jesus say the gospel would be preached?

b. Read Mark 16:14-15. After Jesus rose from the grave, what command did He give?

5. Personal: As we will see later in this week's passage, the gathering of Jews from all over the world in Jerusalem provided the first opportunity for the apostles and the new-born church to begin obeying Jesus' command. Though Christians had not yet traveled to other countries as missionaries, people from other nations had been brought to them to hear the good news about Jesus. Think

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about the people in your own city or town. These may be “the whole world” to which God calls you to witness for Him. How will you begin to do this?

### **Third Day: Review Acts 2:5-21, concentrating on verses 6-13.**

1. a. What caused the crowd to come together? (Acts 2:6)  
  
b. Review Acts 2:2. What did the Jewish pilgrims hear that called them into the temple courts to witness the miracle of God’s Spirit coming upon the church?
2. What area of Israel did the crowd identify as the background of those who were speaking? (Acts 2:7)
3. a. Challenge: Read Matthew 2:19-23. In what district of Israel was Jesus raised?  
  
b. Challenge: Read Matthew 4:18-22. From where did Jesus begin calling His disciples?
4. a. What were some of the languages the crowd could hear? (Acts 2:8-11a)  
  
b. What did they hear the Christians speaking about? (Acts 2:11b)

5. What different reactions came from the people in the crowd? (Acts 2:12-13)
6. Personal: When the Christians in Jerusalem declared “the wonders of God” in many languages, some people wanted to investigate further, but others were quick to dismiss it. When believers today speak of the wonders of God to unbelievers, we will meet the same reaction—some will be interested, and others will be quick to dismiss us. As we will see, the apostles and other believers didn’t let this discourage them—they just kept on telling of Jesus Christ. Is this how you react when someone rejects you or makes fun of you for your Christian witness?

### **Fourth Day: Review Acts 2:5-21, concentrating on verses 14-18.**

1. Who spoke to the crowd, and for what reason? (Acts 2:14)
2. a. What did he say the Christians were not under the influence of? (Acts 2:15)
- b. Read Ephesians 5:18. Who does the apostle Paul say Christians should instead be under the influence of?
3. What does Peter quote from the Old Testament prophet Joel to explain what was taking place? (Acts 2:16-18; this is from Joel 2:28-29)
4. While Joel’s prophecy was partially fulfilled at Pentecost, it remains to be fulfilled in a more complete way at the second coming of Christ. Peter, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, adapts Joel’s prophecy to the present age of the Spirit—an age that begins, Peter says, with the outpouring of the Spirit of God.

Joel refers to the gift of prophecy, the ability to declare the Word of God with power. Read 1 Corinthians 12:7. For what purpose does the Spirit give the gift of prophecy, as well as every other gift?<sup>1</sup>

5. Who will receive the gifts of the out-poured Holy Spirit? (Acts 2:17-18)

6. Personal: We are living in “the last days,” which began when Jesus came to earth the first time. As Peter said, the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all believers. When an individual believes what God has said and invites Him to be the Lord of his or her life, he or she will be filled with the Spirit. Have you realized that the Spirit has given you a gift or gifts to be used “for the common good”? How are you serving your fellow believers by the power of the Spirit?

### **Fifth Day: Review Acts 2:5-21, concentrating on verses 19-20.**

1. Peter said that the outpouring of God’s Spirit was a sign of the Messianic Age, or “the last days.” What signs did he go on to quote from the prophet Joel in Acts 2:19-20a?

2. What will these signs point toward? (Acts 2:20b)

3. a. Jesus also spoke of these things. What did His disciples ask Him in Matthew 24:3?

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1. For more information on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, see the appendix on page 225.

b. What signs similar to Joel's prophecy did Jesus list in Matthew 24:29?

c. What did Jesus say will happen when these signs take place? (Matthew 24:30)

4. Personal: In this Pentecost message, Peter gives us a glimpse of the beginning and end of the present age of the Spirit, the great parentheses that mark the age in which we now live. This age began on Pentecost. It will end after the great tribulation.<sup>1</sup> To our human minds, this seems to take a very long time, with untold and frightening events yet to take place. Yet, God knows all things, is in control of all things, and will bring all the events of this age to a perfect conclusion in His own time. As you face the future, do you trust the One who is in control of all things with the details of your life?

### **Sixth Day: Review Acts 2:5-21, concentrating on verse 21.**

1. What does Peter declare in Acts 2:21 that is true from the beginning to the end of "the last days"?

2. How does the apostle Paul explain this in Romans 10:9-13?

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1. Ray Stedman, Lesson 3 commentary.

3. Challenge: Read Acts 9:1-16. Saul was later known as the apostle Paul. How does Saul's story show that he personally experienced the truth of "*everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"—no matter what he or she has done before coming to the Lord?

4. Personal: Have you "called on the name of the Lord" to be saved from your sin? Or do you feel that you have been too bad for God to consider you for salvation? Do you know someone else who might feel that they need to clean themselves up before God will accept them? How will you explain to them that they can come to Jesus just as they are right now?