

Acts 2 Spirit

PREFACE

God's Word contains the answers to all of life's problems and needs. As we apply God's Word to our daily lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens us, our faith grows, and our lives are transformed.

But for many the bible is a complex book, too huge to tackle.

By selecting important chapters of the Bible (20 from the Old Testament, 20 from the New Testament) and focusing on them, I hope to encourage you to get into God's Word. To help accomplish this, I have prepared a visual memory aid for each key chapter. The aids are purposely *weird* in order to increase retention. Each aid has three elements:

1. The *book* of the Bible
2. The *chapter*
3. The *theme* of the chapter

By studying the memory aid several times and focusing on it, you will recall the image and consequently the book, chapter and theme.

Remembering these key chapters will enrich your daily life. It will also help you to relate God's Word to others. As you write greeting cards or speak with people, you will be able to apply God's Word directly to their problems or needs.

At times, you will be unable to speak directly to a person. Send them a Key Chapter booklet! They are designed for sharing!

Each Key Chapter booklet is presented in the same format:

1. *Background* for the chapter
2. *Key verses* of the chapter
3. *Thoughts* on the theme of the chapter

Bible classes and small study groups will find the third section helpful for discussions. The *thoughts* will provide a variety of applications upon which to reflect.

God will not let his Word return void (Isaiah 55:11)!

He will bless you abundantly as you meditate on his Word (Psalm 119:48)!

He will enable you to be a blessing to others as you spread his Word (Genesis 12: 2-3)!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Paul R. Schroeder

Explanation of the Memory Aid

1. The BOOK of the Bible:
The *axe* = **ACTS**
2. The CHAPTER:
The *number* of birthday candles = **CHAPTER 2**
3. The THEME:
The *Spirit*, often symbolized by a flame, gives birth to the Christian church =
SPIRIT

ACTS 2: BACKGROUND

After the crucifixion of Jesus, his disciples became frightened and hid. They could hardly become leaders of the early church with that attitude. Something had to happen to change them, to make a big change, to make a *life-changing* change.

At his ascension, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to change them. So important would the Spirit's arrival be that Jesus instructed the disciples not to do anything until he came. They prayed and waited.

Acts 2 reports the fulfillment of this promise of Jesus—the Holy Spirit came. It was a glorious day in which God poured out his Spirit on many. It was dramatic and visible. Nobody could doubt that something of great significance was happening.

His arrival was life changing. The disciples, who had been fearful, now became bold and strong in their witness. The change was not a brief emotional high that would pass in a few days. The change was thorough, and they actually grew in their commitment to Christ as time progressed. Even at the time of their deaths, they strongly and boldly proclaimed Christ as the Savior of the world.

How exciting to review the birth of the New Testament church! God is the creator of his church. To this day we celebrate this at the Festival of Pentecost.

Pentecost has direct meaning for us today because God is the same. His Holy Spirit is the same. He still converts, still builds his church. To this day he is the one who instills faith and Christian living, and we look forward to his strengthening and sustaining work upon us and all believers in the future.

KEY VERSES OF ACTS 2

Verses 1

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

Pentecost was an Old Testament festival related to the Passover celebration. It was also called Festival of Weeks, and the Hebrew word *Pentecost* carries the meaning 50 days. Specifically, it marks the beginning of the offering of the first-fruits. The events recorded in Acts 2 have now become the focus of the New Testament church.

Verses 4,11

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them.

We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!

This miraculous gift of speaking in tongues gave evidence to the gathered people that God was present. The miracle also enabled the disciples to proclaim the mighty works of God to those present who could not understand Aramaic.

Verse 13

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."
Some will always disbelieve.

Verse 17

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

Peter was direct in his sermon. He pointed out that with this miracle God began fulfilling his promise given through the prophet Joel that the Spirit would arrive with the arrival of the Messiah's reign (Joel 2: 28-32).

Verse 21

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Peter offered the gospel of forgiveness. This forgiveness is offered today.

Verse 23-24

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

God planned from the beginning to save his people. Christ's death (v. 23) and resurrection (v. 24) are essential to the message of salvation.

Verses 30-32

But he (David) was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Peter reminded his listeners that David believed a Savior would come. He held up Jesus as that Savior. Peter personally witnessed to the resurrection of Christ.

Verse 33

Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Peter said that what they were seeing and hearing was the result of Jesus' sending the Holy Spirit.

Verses 36

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: god has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Verse 38

Peter replied, "Repent and e 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.

Peter finished his Gospel message with an appeal for action. The Holy Spirit moved them to repent and be baptized. Peter announced that the Holy Spirit was a gift for them in their lives. God was available to all of them.

Verses 42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The early Christians were faithful in worship, study, fellowship, communion, and prayer. In Acts 4: 32-35 we are told again of the spiritual unity enjoyed by the early church.

THOUGHTS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

Day 1

It was the Holy spirit that transformed the disciples from cowards into courageous witnesses. Even when their lives were threatened, they continued to speak for Christ's (Acts 4:20).

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Even prior to the Pentecost outpouring, the Spirit was at work. God chose Bezalel son of Uri and filled him, and others, with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts (Exodus 31:3).

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The bible speaks of us *receiving* the gift of the Spirit. God does the giving.

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Fear can be devastating. It can cripple and immobilize. The Holy spirit helps us conquer fear.

Fear causes many people to build a shell around themselves. Their true feelings are therefore hidden. They become impersonal and uncommunicative. What a terrible price to pay, even though they need not fear another person's reaction to them.

This veneer is difficult to penetrate. Just as a baby chick can be harmed by a rough and careless breaking apart of the shell, so also personalities can be damaged by a careless forceful extraction of emotions from someone who is "closed" out of fear. Nature has provided a safer way for the "chick" to break out of its shell. The warm, moist bottom of the mother hen crates the perfect condition for the chick to venture forth into a new environment. The inviting warmth causes it to consider exploring further. The softness invites. So, slowly, ever so slowly, it breaks free from its shell. It chooses to risk the newness because the environment is welcoming.

That's how God wants it to work with people too. Christ repeatedly urged his followers to "fear not." He wants us to be free. It is God's plan that we are to create in our families and in his family (the church) a climate of warmth and acceptance. We are to love one another. When we sense such love and understanding we will begin to risk letting down the walls that separate. We will risk letting our feelings become known. Openness will result. Communication will improve. Fear will be dissolved. Love will grow.

Through the forgiveness he offers in Christ, God has shown that he wants to have a warm, personal, loving relationship with us.

As we grow in his love we will be able to create the climate for others to break out of their shells.

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Day 2

Conversion is the act of God the Holy spirit bringing a person to faith. In John 3 this process is called “being born again”.

There should be no question as to what the phrase “born again” means. It is accurately defined and explained in Scripture. It is amazing, therefore, that within Christendom there has developed some confusion as to the meaning of the phrase.

The confusion can be seen in the question “Are you a born-again Christian?” the Bible equates being born again with conversion. They are synonyms. If a person is born again, then that person is a Christian. If a person is a Christian, then that person is born again. They two are identical. You cannot be one without the other. This is what causes the confusion with the questions “Are you a born-again Christian?” The question implies that you can be a Christian without being born again. The implication is that there is one brand of general “run of the mill” Christians and then another brand of Christians called “born again”.

As we see “born again” defined in the third chapter of John, verses 3-6, and also in 1 Peter 1:3, we see that it is taught as a contrasting opposite of unbelief—very much in the same way that St. Paul uses the contrast between light and darkness. In texts that speak of being “born again” the contrast is between something born of the flesh, which is human and limited and dies, and something born of the Spirit, which is everlasting and which has its origin in god. The point is that flesh cannot produce something spiritual, and therefore if we are to have the kingdom of heaven, it must come as a result of God’s giving us this second birth.

So the question “are you a born-again Christian?” is redundant. Those in the charismatic movement frequently use the question. It is their way of seeking out those who have had a moving experience (such as the gift of tongues). They often claim that their previous Christianity was in question but now that they have had this spiritual experience (equated with being born again) they feel certain of their salvation. When the phrase “born again” is used in this manner, it implies that there are levels of Christian faith or levels of belief.

While it is certainly true that there are levels of maturity and degrees of commitment among Christians, that should not be confused with the simple matter of belief or conversion. Everyone who believes in Jesus, regardless of how weak their faith or how childish their commitment (not to say childlike), has been born again. Any person claiming a relationship with Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior is on the exact same “level” as any other person in God’s kingdom when it comes to the matter of being dependent upon faith for salvation. Faith is always given to us by the mercy of God. It is

the gift of God—not produced by our experience and not brought about by our decision. It is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Decisions, maturities, commitments, increases in good works, and discipline follow that second-birth experience and are a result of the “born again” condition.

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Day 3

The early church grew vigorously (Acts 2:47). The believers’ witness was spontaneous and urgent. Their actions also convinced the people of their sincerity. It was easy to see their love for one another, People had a reason to listen to their message. And, as they spoke of Jesus, the Holy Spirit converted.

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God does it all. He send us a Savior. He moves us to repent. He gives us faith to believe in our Savior for forgiveness. He gives us salvation through the faith he has given.

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God wants his church to grow. It is a universal design of God: All living things must grow to stay alive. This is true of fish, dogs, elephants, fleas, roses, weeds, birds and babies. It is also true of our faith. For our faith to stay alive it must grow! That is the work of the Holy Spirit. He nourishes us on God’s Word, which is the spiritual food to keep us alive spiritually. He also uses the sacraments (Baptism and Holy communion) to renew us and strengthen us in our faith. As we grow in our commitment to God, our desire to share salvation with others increases. As we spread his Word, and the spirit uses the message to convert, more and more people will be brought to faith. His church grows. Not even the gates of hell will prevail against it (Matthew 16:18. (See also Acts 1:8).

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Also for us, the Holy spirit promises comfort and delivery—in his time and in his way.

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Just as the disciples received the gift of the Spirit on Pentecost, so every believer has received at least one gift given by the Holy spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11). The entire 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians speaks about these gifts of grace. These gifts are to be used for the welfare of entire church. The analogy of body parts points to the purpose of the gifts.

Day 4

1 Corinthians 14 addresses the subject of the gift of “tongues”. Paul makes several things clear:

- “Tongues” are not the ultimate proof of one’s faith. In fact, too much importance given to this “experience” can divert attention away from Christ.
- Those who have the gift of “tongues” are *not* “higher level” Christians.
- Speaking the Gospel in a known language is more important than the personal use of an unknown language.
- Caution must be used to avoid problems in the church (1 Corinthians 14: 22-28).
- Order and harmony are to be preserved (1 Corinthians 14:33, 39-40).

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Paul spoke in tongues, but he had his priorities in place (1 Corinthians 14: 5-12, 18-19).

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The Holy Spirit is the Breath of God.

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Christ Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection fulfilled prophecy.

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Repentance comes as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit. Both John the Baptist and Jesus called for repentance—a sign of conversion and faith.

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The Book of Acts also stresses prayer and its importance in the daily life of a Christian. (See Acts 1: 14; 3:1; 6:4; 10:4, 31; 12:5; 16:13, 16.)

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The witnessing begun in Jerusalem spread to Samaria and Judea (Acts 8-12) and finally to the ends of the then-known world (Acts 13-28). The Holy Spirit made the early church a going church—going with a message! (See also Luke 24: 46-49 and Acts 1:8.)

Day 5

Jesus, in the Gospel of John, tells us about the work of the Holy spirit: teaching (14:26); testifying about Christ (15:26); and convicting of sin, guiding in truth, and glorifying Christ (16: 7-11).

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The Holy Spirit is the comforter (Acts 9: 31).

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Believers, by rebellion and resistance to the Word, kill their own faith and thus can grieve the Holy Spirit. (See Ephesians 4:30; Acts 5:3, 9; 7:51.)

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Peter spoke plainly and with guts. Though Peter spoke sharply, he spoke in love, calling them brothers (Acts 2:29). Pray for the freeing power of the Spirit upon pastors today.

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Representative gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed in three chapters of the Bible: Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4. Peter summarizes them and gives their purpose in 1 Peter 4:10-11.

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It is the Holy Spirit who “marks” us as being the children of God (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1: 21-22.)

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The Holy Spirit serves as our advocate in prayer (Romans 8: 26-27).

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The sin against the Holy Spirit is a rejection of the Spirit’s work of repentance and faith and is therefore unforgivable. (See Matthew 12: 31-32; Hebrews 6: 4-6; 10: 26-27; 1 John 5: 16-17).

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Revelation 2:7: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (See also Revelation 2:7, 11,17,19;3:6, 13, 26.)

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Zechariah 4:6: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty.