

## Acts 2 - John Karmelich

As I stated in the first summary lesson, my favorite question about bible study is, "Now what" As in I believe in Jesus, now what?" This lesson is an exception: Instead of "the what" question, I will focus on the "how" question: How do we make a difference for Jesus? Consider that Jesus said that we (as in Christians) will do greater miracles than Jesus did! He cured blindness, deafness, gave mute people the ability to talk instantly, not to mention raise people from the dead. It's always amazed me Jesus said we will do even greater miracles! (That's from John 14:12.) The point is those Jesus helped, still died after getting their miracles. We do greater miracles by leading people to eternal life and leading them closer to God. The "how" leads me to this chapter of Acts. It's about God giving believers the power to make a difference for Him in the world around us.

With that said, let me give a little background on this chapter. In Chapter 1, we read of Jesus taken up to heaven. That was after 40 days of proof that He was alive and being seen by hundreds of people. At that point the text says there were 120 believers. Chapter 2 takes place 10 days later, where the 120 are gathered in one big room. By the end of the chapter, there are 3,000 believers after the Holy Spirit did descend upon the believers. In effect the Holy Spirit is the "how" we make a difference. As I learned a long time ago, the way we make a difference for Jesus is like trying to push a car up a hill: It occurs to us "there's a motor in the car and we don't have to push". The "motor" is the Holy Spirit, who gives us the power to make a difference for Jesus!

That leads to the key question. If we believe we have the power of the Holy Spirit within us, as did the disciples in this chapter, then what? If we don't speak in tongues, does it mean we lack it? No! I know of people who have that gift and I'll discuss it in this lesson. What I want to focus on is if we grasp the Holy Spirit lives within us (which is a free gift we get when we believe Jesus came in the world to die for our sins and He's Lord of our lives), how do we tap that power source? It is more obvious than we think. It's using the gifts God gave us to be a witness for Him. It includes the ability to teach, preach, share the gospel message, musical gifts etc. My point is Christians have the privilege of leading people to Jesus and closer to Him. The Holy Spirit works within us to be able to do those things. Therefore the word "how" is not only my lesson title, but the key point of this text. OK time for details. Let's begin:

All of this began on a Jewish holiday called among other names, "Pentecost". On that holiday is when the church was officially born. The word "Pentecost" isn't in the Old Testament. It's a Greek word that roughly means "50 days." The Hebrew term is usually translated "feast of weeks". It's the only holiday that permits Jews to eat leavened bread. Leaven (yeast) is an Old Testament symbol of sin! Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." (Matthew 13:33b NIV) He said the kingdom of heaven (a reference to the church, in this instance) will have yeast (or leaven) mixed in. It describes growth (bread rises with yeast). It also warns of corruption. The church has had both its wonderful and embarrassing history at the same time.

Before we actually jump into the text, there are a couple of other things to notice about Acts 2. I'd like you to consider the chapter from the perspective of Peter. When you read about Peter in the gospel, he appears to be this "shoot-first-ask-questions-later" type of guy. Plenty of energy, not much on thought.

The point is once we're born-again the Spirit teaches us what to say at the right moment. That does not excuse us from not learning the scriptures! The Holy Spirit gives us recall, not scripture knowledge! I

have seen God take the most bumbling failure and turn them into a wonderful success with the Spirit as a guide. The Christian church history is filled with common, ordinary people, who committed their life to God and then were used in wonderful and dramatic ways for His glory.

I'd also like you to consider this chapter from the perspective of Luke, the author. He wasn't present at this event. Notice the details he reported. If you were there, recounting this amazing story, you would remember these types of details, simply because they were so unusual. Finally consider this story from the point of view of your typical religious Israelite there for the Pentecost feast. What would draw you to this event? Given all of that, let me describe the chapter itself:

The chapter starts with 120 followers of Jesus all in one big room. That's because 10 days earlier Jesus told them to "hang around as something big is coming!" Since it was a holiday, they were gathered in a big room together. Then a sound like wind (not an actual wind) ran through the house. Then they saw a bunch of tongues (what looked like actual tongues) resting on them. For those Jewish people "praising God" was only done in the Jewish language or its cousin language Aramaic. With the wind sound, lots of people were now praising God in lots of other languages, that was the miracle of the moment.

All of that lead to Peter giving a speech. He quoted the Old Testament Book of Joel. That quote had a bunch of predictions that tied to both Jesus First and Second Coming. Why? Remember that those who heard the speech were Jewish and were aware they were guilty of having Jesus crucified. One purpose of the speech was to show it wasn't too late to repent. Peter then quoted from Psalm 2 that states Jesus is sitting at God's right hand side in effect, "until it's too late". Bottom line is he was saying it was not too late for people to repent and accept the Gospel message (as it's not too late today!). Bottom line #2 is by the end of that day, the church grew to 3,000 people.

Since this was the only Christian church in the world at that time, most likely that large group stayed in Jerusalem for a while. They all supported each other since there was nowhere else to go and it is likely that they were excommunicated from their synagogues for becoming Christians. For those of you who like to study church growth, it went from 120 to 3,000 in one day. No special programs or outreaches. It was just a matter of preaching repentance under the power of the Holy Spirit. My point is the "how" (Holy Spirit working within us) is the secret to the spread of Christianity, not by willpower!

Let me also add that we're not saved based on the number of people we lead to Jesus. Our rewards that we get for being Christians is based on using our gifts and our time to make a difference for Him. That is what Jesus calls us to do. As I said to open this lesson, we rely on His power to use our gifts and be a bold witness for Him in our lives. That's the lesson of Chapter 2. As I said earlier, I call this lesson, "How" as in how we use our lives for His glory and "How" He gives us the power to do so! With that said, time for the details!

With that said, this lesson will cover some more background notes as well as go through Chapter 2 on a verse by verse basis. If you're new here, what you've read so far is about 15% of this study. To read the rest of it click on one of the other two links on this chapter. You're always welcome to e-mail me and I hope you like this. Thanks, John