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The Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2



Review from Chapter 1

- The first verses reveal that the author Acts is the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke. Acts is St. Luke's account of all those things that occurred from the time of Christ's holy Ascension to Pentecost, the life of the Early Church, and the conversion and ministry of St. Paul.
- The Lord Jesus Christ presents Himself to a great number of the disciples and His followers after His resurrection during the 40 days until His Ascension.
- The Lord commands His disciples to stay in Jerusalem as they await the descent of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, at Pentecost.
- The disciples ask the Lord when He will restore the Kingdom of Israel.
- The Lord tells the disciples it is not theirs to know the time or seasons of God's work, but again assures them that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them and that they will then be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
- Christ ascends in glory on the Mt. of Olives.
- Two angels appear and question why the disciples are still looking to heaven and assure them that Christ will come again as He was taken up: that is, in glory.
- The disciples, together with those who had been with them at the Ascension, returned to Jerusalem and continued with one accord (v. 14) as they awaited the descent of the Holy Spirit.
- St. Peter leads the Apostles in selecting a replacement for Judas. As St. John Chrysostom comments, "he acted as expositor, not as preceptor." In other words, he acts as the "first among equals," *primus inter pares*, the title later given to the Bishop of Rome because of St. Peter.
- After praying, the disciples draw straws and Matthias is selected to replace Judas as Apostle.

Chapter 2

Acts 2:1-41

- Q: What characterizes the Church, the assembly of the Apostles, at the time of the descent of the Holy Spirit?
- n.b. Day of Pentecost, v. 1, refers to the Feast of Weeks in the OT ("Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord." Lv. 23:16). It took place 50 days after Passover (hence the name, "Pentecost" in Greek. It was a celebration of the "first fruits" of the Spring harvest.
- Q: What manifestations characterize the Descent of the Holy Spirit?
- n.b. Verses 2-4, "wind" (Gk. *πνοῆς*) and Spirit (Gk. *Πνεύματος*) are from the same root.

Q: Why is the Holy Spirit manifested in wind and ‘tongues’ of fire?

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit ^[a]and fire.” (Mt. 3:11)

“And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed. ³ Then Moses said, “I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.” So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” (Ex. 3:2-4)

“This fire is a manifestation of the uncreated energy of God. Because God is wholly uncreated, His power of energy is also uncreated.” (OSB, p. 1470)

Q: Compare, contrast Moses’ encounter with the uncreated energies of God manifested in the Burning Bush and the Apostles and all gathered who receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

Q: Examining the icon of Pentecost, what stands out to you? What does it reveal of that which is implicit and explicit in the Scriptures?

When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, He divided the nations; But when he distributed the tongues of fire He called all to unity. Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-holy Spirit!
(The Kontakion of Pentecost)



A 17th century description of the Cosmos (figure at the bottom) reads, “The man sits in a dark place, since the whole world had formerly been without faith; he is bowed down with years, for he was made old by the sin of Adam; his red garment signifies the devil’s blood sacrifices; the royal crown signifies sin, which ruled the world [as a tyrant]; the white cloth in his hands with the twelve scrolls means the twelve Apostles, who brought light to the whole world with their teaching.” (N. Pokrovsky, *The Gospels in Iconographic Records*, St. Petersburg, 1892, p. 463. Quoted from Ouspensky, Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 1982, p. 208)

Q: Who received the Holy Spirit?

Q: What are the broader manifestations of the Holy Spirit? What happens in Jerusalem (vv. 5-13)?

Q: What is significant in how St. Peter responds to those who claim that those who received the Holy Spirit are “full of new wine” (v. 13)? Why does he quote from the Prophets Joel and David here?

Q: What was the affect of Peter’s sermon?

Q: What three things did Peter instruct them to do (vv. 38-41) and what was its fruit? What is the practice today in the Orthodox Church?

“Do you see what a great thing gentleness is? More than any vehemence, it pricks our hearts, inflicts a keener wound... For he gave no room for their anger to be roused, and darken their judgment, but by means of humility he dispersed, as it were, the mist and darkness of their indignation, and then pointed out to them the daring outrage they had committed.” (St. John Chrysostom, Homily VII on Acts 2:37)

“They did not say, How shall we be saved? But, ‘What shall we do?’... ‘Repent,’ says he, ‘and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.’ (v. 38) He does not yet say, Believe, but, ‘Be baptized every one of you.’ For this they received in baptism.” (ibid.)

Acts 2:42-47

Q: What characterizes the worship and life of the early Orthodox Church?

n.b. “prayer,” verse 42 in the original Greek is “ταῖς προσευχαῖς,” i.e., “the prayers.”

Q: What are the 4 pillars of worship in the early Orthodox Church?

“You should all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father. Follow too the presbytery (priesthood), as you would the Apostles; and respect the deacons as you would God’s law. Nobody must do anything that has to do with the Church without the bishop’s approval. You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or someone he authorizes...” St. Ignatius of Antioch (early 2nd Century, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*)