

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
May 9 - 15

Monday, May 9 – Acts 2: 14 – 41

After the Holy Spirit came on the disciples Peter addresses the crowd and lays out the case for why they should see Christ and trust him as their savior. As Peter preaches his first sermon to the crowd of curious onlookers, Peter uses the whole Bible to make the case for Christ. Look how Peter starts this sermon by quoting the prophet Joel. Peter begins by making sure that the crowd understands that what has happened to Peter and the other disciples is exactly what Joel had prophesied in Joel 2: 28 -32, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. That is one of the big changes that came as a result of Jesus’ death on the cross. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit only came with power on very few people, for a short period of time, for a very specific purpose. But now that Jesus has come, the Spirit is available to all who are willing to trust Christ as their savior.

Peter goes on in verse 22 to tell the crowd that Jesus proved who he was by the miracles he did, was crucified to fulfill God’s purpose and then raised from the dead to prove that Satan, sin and death had been defeated. Peter quotes David’s words from Psalm 16, “You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.” Peter then explains to the crowd that David surely died, so David wasn’t speaking of himself but of Jesus who was to come. Peter then makes sure that the gathered crowd understands that the Jesus they crucified has not just been raised from the dead, but has been raised to sit at the right hand of God. Peter closes his sermon with a plea for the crowd to repent of their sin and turn to Jesus as their savior.

Tuesday, May 10 – Acts 2: 42 – 3: 26

Chapter 2 ends with a beautiful picture of what the early church looked like. It is also a picture of what today's church should look like. Notice the early church was learning, fellowshiping, sharing, and praying together, and as they did that more and more people were joining the church and becoming followers of Christ.

In chapter 3 we see a lame beggar asking Peter and John to give him some money, but instead they give him Jesus and the ability to walk again. This, of course, amazes everyone and gives Peter a chance once again to share Christ with the crowd that gathers. Again Peter starts by reminding the crowd what they did to Jesus and then ties everything that happened to Jesus back to the Old Testament and the words of the prophets, Moses, Samuel, and Abraham.

Wednesday, May 11 – Acts 4: 1 – 31

In chapter 4 we see the Jewish leaders who had put Jesus to death try to silence Peter and John. The question they ask Peter and John in verse 7, "By what power or name did you do this?" only gives Peter a chance to preach again. Peter proclaims that all they are doing is being done in the name of Jesus, whom they crucified but God raised from the dead. Peter tells them that Jesus is the only name that can save them (verse 12). The leaders are absolutely amazed at Peter and John because they have no formal training or education (verse 13), but they also note that "these men had been with Jesus." Luke tells us that there wasn't much they could say because the man who had been lame was now standing there right in front of them. They try to silence Peter and John and warn them not to speak any more about Jesus, but in verse 19 Peter and John tell the Jewish leaders that they have to obey God and do what's right in God's eyes rather than what is right in man's eyes. In verses 23 – 31, the believers meet together to pray; notice in verse 29 what they asked for as

they prayed—boldness. It is an amazing request considering how bold they have already been.

Thursday, May 12 – Acts 4: 32 – 5: 11

The end of chapter 4 sets up what happens next in chapter 5. In order to take care of the poor, believers were selling their land and possessions and bringing gifts to the church to be used to help the poor. There is a lot we can learn from what happens next. Clearly as we read these verses we see that God cares much more about our hearts than he does our outward acts of worship. Ananias and Sapphira's sin was that they made a pretense of giving all the proceeds from the sale of their property, but they had kept some for themselves. Their sin wasn't holding back some of the proceeds, it was telling a lie by pretending to give all the proceeds when they were keeping some for themselves. We can't play games with God, because God knows what is in our hearts. The early church realized early on that the gift of the Holy Spirit also came with responsibility to live life in a way that is pleasing to God. You can try to fool people but you can't ever fool God!

Friday, May 13 – Acts 5: 12 – 42

In today's passage we see that the disciples had been given amazing power to perform many miracles, and as a result more and more people were becoming followers of Jesus. Verse 17 tells us that the religious leaders of the Jews became filled with jealousy and had Peter and John arrested and put in prison. But in verse 19 an angel shows up and sets them free, telling them to go back to the temple courts and preach the gospel. Imagine the shock of the religious leaders when the men they had arrested the day before were right back in the temple preaching about Jesus again. They have Peter and John re-arrested and question them why they continue to do what they have been told not to do. Peter and John's answer in verse 29 is good for us to remember "We must obey God rather than men." They wanted to put Peter and

John to death right on the spot, but are talked out of it by Gamaliel, who was also the Pharisee that trained Paul (Acts 22:3). So instead they beat them, and this gives us just a foretaste of the persecution that is to come as the book of Acts continues to unfold. What is really interesting is Peter and John's response to the beating in verses 41 and 42. First, they rejoiced that they were worthy of suffering for Jesus and second they kept right on preaching day after day.

Saturday, May 14 – Acts 6: 1 – 15

As the church grew and added to its numbers, the needs of the church also grew. In Acts 6 we see a group of people who need ministry, but are being overlooked because among the 12 disciples there was not enough manpower to take care of the physical needs of some of the widows in the church. To make sure they are able to continue their ministry of teaching and prayer, they appoint men to serve as deacons to take care of the mercy needs of the church. Stephen is one of those men, and he would become the first known martyr for the name of Christ. As they put Stephen on trial notice how calm he is in verse 15.

Sunday, May 15 – Acts 7: 1 – 53

In these first 53 verses of Acts 7 Stephen defends himself, but not like you would expect a man to defend himself. He is really defending the cause of Christ, and as he does so he recounts the history of the Old Testament and the Jewish people. He tells the Jewish court what they already know. That God chose the Jews through Abraham to be his special people. God protected and blessed the Jews through Moses and David, and God made his dwelling with the Jews in the temple Solomon built for him, but the Jews turned away from God, killed his prophets, and ultimately killed his son Jesus. In short Stephen calls them what they are: murderers. It is not exactly what you would expect a man on trial for his life to do, is it?