

Bible Study 7

Jesus' Usage of Jewish Scripture

Aim: To examine how Jesus uses the Jewish Scriptures in the Gospels and how Christians may hear those texts today as a call to faithful and holy living.

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, open our hearts and minds as we study your Word. Help us to hear the Scriptures as Jesus taught them, to recognize your liberating work among us, and to respond with faith, humility, and holy living. Guide our conversation, deepen our understanding, and form us into a community that bears witness to your justice, mercy, and peace. Amen.

Learning Guide Questions

- What might Jewish Scripture have meant within its own historical and theological context?
- What should we understand about the imagination and hope of the First Testament?
- How does Jesus interpret Scripture in relation to his mission and message?
- How can Christians today hear Jesus' call to holy living?

Primary Texts

Opening Reflection Question: Is the Holy Spirit still being poured out on all people in the contemporary Church? If so, how do we recognize the Spirit's work?

Readings: Acts 2:14-40

Acts 2:14–21, 22–28, and 29–40

Peter's Pentecost Sermon

Commentary:

When the Day of Pentecost arrived, Luke presented the event as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel's resurrection community. The Spirit came through extraordinary signs of God's fresh movement, enabling communication among people from many cultural and religious backgrounds in their own languages. No barrier prevented the proclamation of God's saving work and Israel's restoration—a restoration that would become the foundation for spreading the good news throughout the world.

Our focus is Peter's extended speech and theological interpretation of this unique Pentecost event. Addressed to a Jewish audience, the sermon unfolds in three related segments.

Segment 1: The Spirit Poured Out—Acts 2:14–21

Peter interprets the dramatic movement of the Spirit as the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32. In Joel, the devastation by locusts serves as a divine warning and a summons to repentance and communal fasting. God removes the plague and restores the people. The Lord's reign is then portrayed through the outpouring of the Spirit across familiar social boundaries, calling every person to participate responsibly in the community's life with God. Against the backdrop of the approaching "day of the Lord" in Joel 2:1–3, the promise announces a decisive reversal of fortune.

Read Joel 2:18–31, and consider the following questions:

1. What restoration does the Lord promise to bring to the land?
2. Why are satisfaction and praise presented together?
3. In what sense is the outpouring of the Spirit all-encompassing?

4. Who is included among “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord”?

Read Acts 2:14–21 again, and compare Peter’s use of Joel:

5. What changes in sequence or emphasis do you notice between Joel and Peter’s quotation?

6. How might Peter’s audience have understood the promise that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”?

Segment 2: Jesus’ Death and Resurrection—Acts 2:22–28

Peter affirms God’s work in Jesus and presents an early summary of Christian confession: Jesus’ ministry was attested by God; human agents participated in his death; and God raised him from the dead. Peter then quotes Psalm 16:8–11, interpreting David’s words as a witness to Jesus’ resurrection.

READ PSALM 16: 8-11 AND CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. How does reliance on God strengthen and sustain the psalmist?

2. What hope does verse 10 express concerning death, deliverance, and God’s preserving presence?

3. Why does life in God’s presence lead to joy?

Read Acts 2:25–28 again:

4. What does Peter understand David to be saying about Jesus?

5. Why is the resurrection essential for a community experiencing a new movement of the Spirit?

Segment 3: Jesus Exalted as Lord and Messiah—Acts 2:29–40

Peter returns to David and quotes Psalm 110:1 to support his proclamation that God raised and exalted Jesus. The Spirit's outpouring bears witness to this divine action and empowers the message to cross human boundaries and reach all people.

Read Psalm 110:1–7, an enthronement psalm, and consider:

1. What images of authority, conflict, and victory shape the language of this psalm?
2. According to verse 1, who grants authority to the king, and why is that significant?

Read Acts 2:29–40 again:

3. Why was David's prophetic witness to Jesus' resurrection important to the early Church (vv. 34–35)?
4. What gives this Pentecost celebration its particular significance (vv. 37–41)? Consider the following dimensions:
 - a) the wonder and urgency of the moment;
 - b) the visible and audible signs of the Spirit's outpouring;
 - c) the crowd's willingness to listen to Peter; and
 - d) the response of those who accepted the message.
5. What does it mean to be "saved from this corrupt generation," and what might faithful obedience look like today?

Study Summary

Acts 2 presents Pentecost as the fulfillment of God's promises and the beginning of a Spirit-empowered witness that crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries. In the first segment, Peter uses Joel to proclaim that the Spirit is poured out broadly and that everyone who calls on the Lord may be saved. In the second, he uses Psalm 16 to confess that God raised Jesus from the dead, grounding Christian hope in the resurrection. In the third, he draws on Psalm 110 to proclaim Jesus as exalted Lord and Messiah and to call his hearers to repentance, baptism, and faithful participation in the new community. Together, these passages invite the Church to read Scripture attentively, receive the Spirit humbly, bear witness courageously, and embody the justice, holiness, and love revealed in Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Closing Prayer: Gracious and faithful God, we thank you for speaking through the Scriptures and for revealing your saving love in Jesus Christ. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon all who hear this teaching and choose to obey your Word. Open our minds to understand, soften our hearts to receive, and strengthen our lives to follow the way of Jesus. May the love of Christ proclaimed in the Scriptures take root in us, unite us across every boundary, and bear fruit in compassion, holiness, justice, mercy, and peace. Give us courage to witness to the risen Lord in word and in deed, so that others may encounter your grace through our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, we pray. Amen.