

## **Bible Reading Challenge 42: THE CHURCH: RESURRECTION AND PENTECOST**

What went on those three days that Jesus was in the tomb? What must his disciples have been thinking? We know they stuck together, for some reason—maybe they were trying to figure out what to do next. But at least they were together when the next big thing happened.

Flash back to the last supper—a night of sorrow, but full of promise. Jesus told his friends, “I have to return to my Father soon, and I’ll prepare a place for you to join me there. *But not yet.*” They had work to do first: a job so huge and important they couldn’t begin to do it on their own. “But I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever—even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he dwells with you and will be in you” John 14:16-17). What do you imagine the disciples thought about that? They probably didn’t have a clue what he was talking about.

But soon they would. The curtain over their understanding was about to be ripped away and their world was about to be turned upside-down, because of two events: the resurrection of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Both were promised ages ago, but as we’ve already seen, there was a lot that Jesus’ followers just didn’t get. They needed help—they needed a helper. It was finally time for the Helper to come and the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven to be thrown open to ordinary people: educated and ignorant, rich and poor, men and women, slaves and masters, old men and children . . . you and me.

Most of our reading this week is from Luke, who wrote both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Read together, Luke and Acts form a continuous story, and probably the most exciting story ever written—all the better for being true.

**Reading for this Week:** John 14, Luke 24, Acts 1-4

**Further references:** Joel 2:28-32, Psalm 16

**Key verse:** “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else.” Acts 4:11-12a

### **Questions to Think and Talk About:**

1. Brainstorm together and list all the promises that Jesus makes in John 14 (I found eleven!). Which of these promises are kept in Acts 1-4?
2. Jesus gave two of his disciples a history lesson in Luke 24:27. Can you remember any Old Testament passages might he have pointed to? (see Acts 3:21-22) (also see Bible Reading Challenges 2, 4, 5, 10,11,14, 18, 22, 28-34 . . .)
3. Why are the disciples so slow to believe? (see Luke 24:25 and 37-38) What does Acts 1:6 reveal about their understanding, even after the resurrection? What does it take to make them truly believe? (For Peter’s
4. What are Jesus’ instructions in Luke 24:45-49, Acts 1:4-5 and Acts1:7-8? How do they apply to us today?
5. Compare Acts 1:14 with 2:1, 2:41-44, 3:19-20, 24-31. What do these verses say about what the Church should do?
6. What’s the main point of Peter’s sermon? Can you find a sentence that sums it all up?
7. How were the disciples changed after Pentecost? (Find two or three specific examples in Acts 2-4.) What made the difference?

### **Activities:**

- Write scenario of Luke 24:1-35. Create 2-3 scenes, list the characters involved and write some of the dialogue, trying to get into the feelings and reactions of the characters.
- Acts 1:8 is said to be an outline of the whole book of Acts—that is, Jesus pictures the gospel spreading out from Jerusalem in ever-widening circles: to Judea, to Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world. Make a poster showing how the gospel can spread out from you as you go through life.
- Outline or rewrite Peter’s sermon in your own words.