

# BOOK OF ACTS — CHAPTER 2 (Week 3)

## Acts 2 — “Pentecost: The Spirit Comes and the Church Is Born”

### *Big Idea*

Acts 2 teaches that the risen and exalted Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit to form a new covenant people—empowered for witness, united across boundaries, and devoted to life together as God’s Spirit-filled church.

*Key Text: Acts 2:1–47*

### Purpose of Acts 2

Acts 2 records the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in Acts 1: the gift of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost marks the public birth of the church and reveals what life looks like when God’s Spirit dwells among his people.

### Outline of Acts 2

1. The coming of the Spirit (2:1–4)
2. The reversal of Babel: the nations hear the gospel (2:5–13)
3. Peter’s Pentecost sermon (2:14–36)
4. The Spirit’s work of conviction and response (2:37–41)
5. The life of the Spirit-formed community (2:42–47)

### Major Themes in Acts 2

1. **Pentecost fulfills God’s promises (2:1–4)** — The Spirit is not an optional add-on for the church; he is God’s promised gift for the last days.
  - a. Pentecost occurs on a Jewish feast celebrating harvest and covenant renewed
  - b. The wind and fire recall God’s presence at Sinai
  - c. The Spirit’s coming signals that the new covenant age has begun
2. **The gospel is for all nations (2:5–13)** — The Spirit creates unity without erasing difference.
  - a. Jews from across the world hear the gospel in their own languages
  - b. This is not chaos, but clarity
  - c. Pentecost reverses Babel by uniting people through Christ
3. **Jesus is exalted as Lord and Messiah (2:14–36)** — Pentecost is not mainly about spiritual experience—it is about the lordship of Jesus.
  - a. Peter explains Pentecost through Scripture (Joel 2; Psalms 16 and 110)
  - b. Jesus’ death, resurrection, and exaltation are central
  - c. The outpouring of the Spirit proves Jesus reigns now
4. **The Spirit brings conviction, repentance, and new life (2:37–41)**
  - a. The crowd is “cut to the heart”
  - b. Repentance and baptism mark entry into the new covenant community
  - c. The promise of the Spirit extends to all whom God calls
5. **The Spirit forms a new way of life together (2:42–47)** — The Spirit forms not just individual believers, but a visible, embodied community.
  - a. Devotion to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer
  - b. Radical generosity and shared life
  - c. Worship and witness overflow naturally

# JUSTIFICATION, REGENERATION, AND SANCTIFICATION

Christians often use words like justification, regeneration, and sanctification to describe salvation. These terms describe different aspects of the same saving work of God. They are distinct, but deeply connected.

## 1. JUSTIFICATION: BEING PUT RIGHT WITH GOD

Justification answers the question: How am I forgiven and accepted by God?

Justification is God's act of forgiving sin and declaring a person righteous on the basis of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. It is about our standing before God.

### *Key ideas:*

- Forgiveness of sins
- Being declared righteous
- Reconciliation with God
- A change in status

### *Scripture examples:*

- "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)
- "They are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24)

## 2. REGENERATION: BEING MADE NEW

Regeneration answers the question: How do I receive new life?

Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit by which a person is spiritually reborn. It is the inner transformation that brings a person from spiritual death to spiritual life.

### *Key ideas:*

- New birth
- New heart
- New creation
- Spiritual renewal

### *Scripture examples:*

- "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)
- "He saved us... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5)
- "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

## 3. SANCTIFICATION: BEING MADE HOLY

Sanctification answers the question: How am I changed over time?

Sanctification is the ongoing work of God by which believers are formed into the likeness of Christ. It involves growth in holiness, love, and obedience.

### *Key ideas:*

- Growth in holiness
- Transformation of character
- Participation in Christ's life
- Obedient living

### *Scripture examples:*

- “This is the will of God, your sanctification.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3)
- “Be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” (Romans 12:2)

## **HOW THESE RELATE TO EACH OTHER**

Justification and regeneration are distinct realities, but they are often held closely together in Scripture. Being forgiven and being made new usually occur together as part of conversion.

Because of this close connection, Paul sometimes uses justification and regeneration language interchangeably or side by side.

### *Examples of overlap in Paul:*

- Titus 3:5–7 joins regeneration, renewal, justification, and inheritance in one saving act
- Romans 6 connects justification language with new life and transformation
- 1 Corinthians 6:11: “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified...”

The point is not to separate these realities too sharply, but to see them as different dimensions of the same saving grace.

## **BAPTISM AND BAPTISMAL REGENERATION**

The classic Christian view of baptism sees it as more than a symbol, but not magic.

Baptismal regeneration teaches that God uses baptism as a means through which he gives new life and incorporates believers into Christ. In this view, baptism is an instrument of God’s grace, not merely a human testimony.

### *Scripture often connects baptism with salvation language:*

- “Repent and be baptized... for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)
- “Baptism... now saves you.” (1 Peter 3:21)

“All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.” (Romans 6:3)

At the same time, classic Christianity distinguishes baptismal regeneration from the idea that baptism works automatically or apart from faith. God is the one who saves; baptism is the means he has appointed.

## **BAPTISM VS. “WITNESS ONLY” VIEWS**

Some traditions understand baptism primarily as a public witness or testimony of faith. In this view, baptism does not confer grace but simply symbolizes what has already happened.

Classic Christianity, however, has historically taught that baptism is:

- A means of grace
- A participation in Christ’s death and resurrection
- An act where God is at work, not just the believer

The difference is not whether baptism matters (all Christians agree it does), but what baptism is doing. Is it only our witness, or also God’s action?