

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Week #22 – Adult Bible Study – 2025 & 2026

Discovering the Bible

March 10 & 11, 2026

Review – The Resurrection

1. Multiple and various accounts of people’s encounters with the resurrected Jesus attest to the central story of the Good News of Christian faith that Jesus was dead but is now alive
2. The resurrected Jesus is the same as before – yet also different
3. Clearly, hundreds of people believed that Jesus was alive again
4. Jesus’ resurrection is the event/reality upon which all Christian faith is based

The Spirit

5. General Thoughts

- a. Following the Resurrection, Jesus appeared among the disciples in many ways
- b. Jesus’ final appearance (according to Luke in Acts) was forty days later
- c. Upon Jesus’ departure, the Holy Spirit moves to the center of the story, during the celebration of Pentecost (the closing celebration of the grain harvest)
- d. The Spirit empowers the disciples in new ways, and they begin to spread the message about Jesus and to continue Jesus’ ministry in ever-wider circles of people
- e. Hebrew (*ruach*) and Greek (*pneuma*) for “wind” or “spirit” – Latin (*spiritus*)

6. Acts 1:1-11 – the Ascension

- a. This book, written by Luke as a “sequel” to the Gospel, tells the story of the earliest church
- b. The story begins with Jesus’ final words
- c. Jesus counsels the disciples not to worry about when he will return, but instead simply to wait for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit
- d. Jesus gives the disciples their mission for life: “...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (v.8b)

7. Acts 1:12-26 – the 13th Apostle is Chosen

- a. The disciples return to Jerusalem – the men, and also the women
- b. They devote themselves to prayer
- c. It is time to replace Judas (whose fate is mentioned here)
- d. The criteria established for a new apostle are that he be someone who was with the group during the ministry of Jesus
- e. They pray...and then they vote...and Matthias is chosen

8. Acts 2:1-47 – Pentecost

- a. The Spirit appears – mysteriously, but unmistakably – “And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.”
- b. Everyone, regardless of their native language, hear the message about Jesus
- c. Note: there are always disbelievers to explain away the movement of God
- d. Peter preaches the “first” Christian sermon
 - i. He notes the prophetic backstory of the story of Jesus
 - ii. He tells the story of Jesus’ life
 - iii. He interprets Jesus’ life from the Scriptures – Psalm 16
 - iv. He proclaims that Jesus has been raised
 - v. He calls for people to repent, believe, and be baptized (to join the ranks of followers)
 - vi. And...many believe!
- e. The community of believers is profoundly influenced: worshiping and studying, sharing fellowship and worldly possessions, creating the continuing community of the church

9. Acts 4:1-22 – Peter & John

- a. Jesus' disciples are confronted by the continuing hostility of the Jewish leadership
- b. Peter again preaches, quoting scripture (Ps 11): "...the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone"
- c. With the disciples is a man who had been cured, a sure sign of the presence of God
- d. The leaders back down, but try to get the disciples to quit witnessing

10. Acts 4:23-37 – The Disciples Continue to Share About Jesus

- a. Again, they note biblical warrant for what is happening to them: "Why did the Gentiles rage..." (Ps 2)
- b. Again, it is noted that they are filled with the Holy Spirit
- c. Again, the radically different community life is lifted up – sharing
- d. A new leader comes to the forefront: Barnabas, from Cyprus, who sells a field and gives it to the work of the church so that the work can continue

11. Acts 6:1-7 – the Church is Organized

- a. In order to take better care of the widows, certain disciples are selected for this special work
- b. Here is the division of labor that results in Elders and Deacons being set apart for their respective work: teaching the Word and enacting the Word

12. Acts 6:8-15 and 7:51-60 – Stephen

- a. A certain disciple named Stephen encounters opposition to his work and preaching
- b. Stephen is filled with the Spirit so much that his very appearance is changed
- c. Stephen preaches to his accusers from the story of the Old Testament, of the traditional and tragic rejection by the people of God's messengers, by implication saying that now the people are doing the same thing as they reject the news about Jesus: "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute?" (7:51-52)
- d. Stephen is stoned to death: the first Christian martyr

13. Acts 8:4-25 – Stories of the Spread of the Message

- a. A general persecution/backlash spreads
- b. The disciples are scattered (for safety) but the result is that the Gospel spreads even further!
- c. Philip preaches in Samaria; people are healed
- d. Simon (a former magician) preaches, and people believe and are baptized
- e. Peter & John are sent to Samaria
- f. Simon tries to buy the power of the Spirit – but God's gift is free to all
- g. Note: the Gospel spreads even among the hated Samaritans

Questions for Your Life Today

- A. Describe a time in your life when you personally felt or witnessed a special spiritual power – the presence of the Holy Spirit
- B. Have you ever been called on to share the story of Jesus with someone else?
- C. What are some modern examples of resistance to the Gospel?
- D. The Spirit creates a new kind of community: describe that community, and explain its power
- E. The practice of prayer and the understanding of scripture are key to the message and the growth of the church. How is this true and made manifest in the church today?

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Primary Source: Discovering the Bible: A New Generation, published by The Kerygma Program, Pittsburgh, PA. Boyd Lien, author.