# Learn to Read the Bible 2b – The Spread of the Gospel

*Back cover: This book tells about how the word of God spread and how the church began to grow.*

*Text modified from the Good News Translation (1994)*

## Jesus is taken up to heaven

Acts 1:6-9

After Jesus had risen from the dead, he appeared to his disciples. He said to them, “When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power. Then you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all the nearby regions, and then to the ends of the earth.” After saying this, he was taken up to heaven.

**Questions**

1. What did Jesus do after he had risen from the dead?
2. What did Jesus say would happen when the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples?
3. What did Jesus say his disciples would do?
4. What happened after Jesus had spoken with the disciples?

## The coming of the Holy Spirit

*Acts 2:1-47*

One day, the believers were gathered in one place. Suddenly there was a noise like a strong wind blowing. The believers saw what looked like tongues of fire which touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they began to talk in other languages.

There were Jews living in Jerusalem, who had come from different countries. They were amazed when they heard the believers speaking in their languages. They said, “How is it that we hear these people speaking in our own languages? They are telling about the great things God has done!”

Then Peter began to speak to the crowd: “Let me tell you what this means. This is what the prophet Joel spoke about:

*‘God says: In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on everyone.’*

“You must turn away from your sins. You must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit.”

Many of the people there believed his message and were baptized.

The believers spent their time in learning from the apostles. They took part in the fellowship and shared in the fellowship meals and the prayers. They praised God and enjoyed the good will of all the people.

Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles. Everyone was filled with awe. Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

**Questions**

1. What happened when the believers were gathered?
2. Why were the people from other countries amazed?
3. What did Peter say the people would need to do?
4. What did many of the people who believed do next?
5. What did the believers used to do?

## The apostles are persecuted

*Acts 5:17―6:7*

The leaders became very jealous of the apostles. One day, they put them in jail. But that night an angel of the Lord opened the prison gates. He led the apostles out. He said to them, “Go to the Temple. Tell the people all about this new life.” The apostles obeyed.

In the morning, the leaders could not find the apostles in prison. Then a man said to them, “The men are in the Temple teaching the people!” So, an officer went with his men and brought the apostles back.

The High Priest said to the apostles, “We told you not to teach in the name of this man!” ﻿Peter and the other apostles replied, “We must obey God, not men.”

When the leaders heard this, they were very angry. They had the apostles whipped. They ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus. Then they set them free.

The apostles were happy, because God had considered them worthy to suffer for the sake of Jesus. Every day they continued to preach the Good News about Jesus.

The word of God continued to spread. The number of believers in Jerusalem grew larger and larger.

**Questions**

1. Why did the leaders put the apostles in jail?
2. What did the angel say to the apostles?
3. What did the leaders say and do to the apostles?
4. Why were the apostles happy?
5. What happened to the believers in Jerusalem?

## Stephen is arrested and stoned

Acts 6:8―7:60

Stephen was a man whom God has blessed. He performed miracles and wonders among the people. But some men seized him and took him before the leaders. They told lies about him. They said, “This man is always talking against our Temple and the Law of Moses.”

The leaders fixed their eyes on Stephen. They saw that his face looked like the face of an angel.

The High Priest asked Stephen, “Is this true?”

Stephen answered, “You are deaf to God’s message! You are just like your ancestors! You are the ones who received God’s law — yet you have not obeyed it!”

As the leaders listened to Stephen, they became furious. But Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. He said, “I see heaven opened. I also see the Son of Man standing at the right side of God!”

With a loud cry, the leaders threw him out of the city, and stoned him. As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! Do not remember this sin against them!” Then he died.

**Questions**

1. What kind of man was Stephen?
2. What did the men accuse Stephen of doing?
3. What did Stephen say to the High Priest?
4. What did Stephen see?
5. What did Stephen pray as he was being stoned?

## The gospel is preached in Samaria

Acts 8:1-25

The church in Jerusalem began to suffer persecution. The believers were scattered, but they still preached the message. Philip went to the main city in Samaria and preached there. The crowds listened to what Philip said, and they saw the miracles he performed. Many people were healed. There was great joy in that city.

The apostles in Jerusalem heard about this. So, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for the believers. Then they received the Holy Spirit.

After they had proclaimed the Lord's message, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. On their way they preached the Good News in many villages of Samaria.

**Questions**

1. Why were the believers scattered?
2. What did they continue to do?
3. Why was there joy in the city?
4. What did the apostles do when they heard about what had happened?
5. What happened when Peter and John prayed for the people?

## The conversion of Paul

Acts 8:3; 9:1-31

There was a man called Paul who wanted to destroy the church. He threw many believers into jail. He also went to Damascus to arrest the believers there.

As Paul was coming near the city, suddenly a light flashed round him. He fell to the ground. He heard a voice saying to him, “Paul! Why do you persecute me?”

“Who are you, Lord?” he asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you persecute. Get up and go into the city. There you will be told what you must do.”

The men who were travelling with Paul led him into the city. For three days he was not able to see.

The Lord said to a believer there, “Go and meet a man called Paul. I have chosen him to serve me. He will make my name known to Gentiles and kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him all that he must suffer for my sake.”

So, he went to Paul. He placed his hands on him, and said, “Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me. He wants you to see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” At once Paul was able to see again. Then he was baptized.

Later, Paul went to Jerusalem and tried to join the believers. At first, they did not believe he was a believer. But Barnabas explained to them how Paul had seen the Lord.

The church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had a time of peace. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, it was strengthened and grew in numbers.

**Questions**

1. What did Paul want to do in Damascus?
2. What did the voice say to Paul?
3. Why did the men lead Paul into the city?
4. How did Paul regain his sight?
5. How did Barnabas help Paul?

## Peter and Cornelius

Acts 10:1-48

There was a man called Cornelius. He was a captain in the Roman army. He and his whole family worshipped God. He also helped the Jewish poor people. He was constantly praying to God.

One day, Cornelius had a vision. An angel of God said to him, “God is pleased with your prayers and works of charity. He is ready to answer you. Send some men for a man called Peter.” So, Cornelius sent some of his men to find Peter.

Also, Peter had a vision. A voice said to him, “Do not consider unclean anything that God has declared clean.” Peter wondered about the meaning of this vision. At that moment, the men sent by Cornelius arrived at front of the gate. The Spirit said to Peter, “Three men are here looking for you. Do not hesitate to go with them. I have sent them.”

Peter went with them. In Cornelius’ home he found many people gathered. He said to them, “You know that a Jew is not allowed to visit or associate with Gentiles. But God has shown me that I must not consider any person unclean.”

“I now realize that God treats everyone on the same basis. Those who worship him and do what is right are acceptable to him. It does not matter what race they belong to.

“You know the message he sent to the people of Israel. You know about Jesus. You have heard how God poured out on him the Holy Spirit and power. Jesus went everywhere doing good and healing everyone. God was with him.

“He was put to death on a cross. But God raised him from death three days later. He appeared to us.

“He commanded us to preach the gospel. All who believe in him will have their sins forgiven.”

The Holy Spirit came down on all those who were listening to Peter. The Jewish believers were amazed that God poured out the Holy Spirit even on the Gentiles. Peter said, “These people have received the Holy Spirit, just as we did. So, they should also be baptized with water!” He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Questions**

1. What kind of man was Cornelius?
2. What did the angel say to Cornelius?
3. What did the voice say to Peter?
4. What did Peter find in the home of Cornelius?
5. According to Peter, how does God treat people?
6. What happened to the people listening to Peter?
7. Why were the Jewish believers surprised?

## Peter's report to the church at Jerusalem

Acts 11:1-18

The apostles and the other believers heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. But some criticized Peter, saying, “You were a guest in the home of Gentiles. You even ate with them!”

So, Peter gave them an account of what had happened. When they heard this, they stopped their criticism. They said, “God has also given to the Gentiles the opportunity to repent and live!”

**Questions**

1. What did some people say against Peter?
2. What did Peter tell the elders and the other believers?
3. What did the people say then?

**More persecution**

Acts 12:1-24

About this time, the king began to persecute some members of the church. He had James killed. He also arrested Peter. Peter was put in jail and guarded by many soldiers. The people of the church were praying to God for him.

One night, Peter was sleeping between two guards. He was bound by chains. Suddenly an angel woke Peter up. He said, “Hurry!” The chains fell off Peter’s hands. The angel said, “Come with me!” Peter followed him out of the prison. He thought he was seeing a vision. Outside, the angel left Peter. Then Peter realized what had happened to him. He said, “The Lord sent his angel to rescue me from the king.”

Peter went to meet the believers. Many people had gathered there and were praying. When they saw him, they were amazed. He explained to them how the Lord had brought him out of prison.

Meanwhile the word of God continued to spread and grow.

**Questions**

1. Why was Peter arrested?
2. What did the church do while Peter was in jail?
3. What did Peter think was happening?
4. What did Peter tell the believers?
5. What was happening to the word of God?

## Paul and Barnabas are chosen and sent

Acts 13:1-3; 14:21-28

Believers in the church at Antioch were serving the Lord and fasting. The Holy Spirit said to them, “Set apart for me Paul and Barnabas. I want them to do the work to which I have called them.”

They fasted and prayed. Then they sent them off.

Paul and Barnabas preached the Good News in different cities and regions. They encouraged the believers to remain true to the faith. They said, “We must pass through many troubles to enter the Kingdom of God.”

When they returned to Antioch, they gathered the people of the church together. They told them about how God had opened the way for the Gentiles to believe.

**Questions**

1. What did the Holy Spirit say?
2. What did the Holy Spirit want Paul and Barnabas to do?
3. What did the believers do?
4. What did Paul and Barnabas do?
5. What did they tell the believers about troubles?
6. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, what did they tell the church?

## The meeting at Jerusalem

Acts 15:1-35

Some men started teaching, “You cannot be saved unless you are circumcised. The Law of Moses requires this.” Paul and Barnabas were angry about this. So, they went to Jerusalem to discuss this matter with the apostles and elders.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they told what God had done through them. But some of the believers there said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised. They must be told to obey the Law of Moses.”

The apostles and the elders met together to consider this question. Peter said, “God has given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. He has forgiven their sins because they believed. He made no difference between us and them.”

Paul and Barnabas reported the miracles and wonders that God had performed through them among the Gentiles. Everyone was silent.

Then James said, “We should not trouble the Gentiles who are turning to God. They only need to keep from eating any food that has been offered to idols. They must keep themselves from sexual immorality. Also, they are not to eat meat that has been strangled, or blood.”

The apostles and the elders sent a letter to the believers in Antioch with these rules. The letter was taken by Paul, Barnabas, and some other men. When the people read it, they were filled with joy.

**Questions**

1. Why did Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem?
2. What did Peter say?
3. What did Paul and Barnabas say?
4. What did James say?
5. What was in the letter sent to Antioch?

## Timothy joins Paul

Acts 16:1-5

In one town, Paul met a Christian called Timothy. All the believers in that area spoke well of him. Paul took Timothy along with him. They told the believers in different towns to obey the rules which the apostles and elders had decided on.

The churches were made stronger in the faith and grew in numbers every day.

**Questions**

1. Who did Paul meet?
2. What did Paul and Timothy tell the believers to do?
3. What was happening to the churches?

## Paul in Athens

Acts 17:16-34

While Paul was in the city of Athens, he saw how many idols there were in the city. This made him upset. He talked with the Jews and with the Gentiles who worshipped God. He also talked with the people in the public square.

Some people brought Paul before the city council. The council said to him, “We would like to know more about this new teaching. Some of the things we hear you say sound strange to us. We would like to know what they mean.”

Paul said, “I see that in every way you people of Athens are very religious. I found an altar here on which is written, ‘To an Unknown God’. This is the God I now proclaim to you. He made the world and everything in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. Yet, he is not far from any one of us.

“God commands all people to turn away from their evil ways. One day, he will judge the whole world. He will do this through a man he has chosen. He has raised that man from death!”

When they heard Paul speak about a raising from death, some of them made fun of him. But others said, “We want to hear you speak about this again.” Paul left the meeting. Some men joined him and believed.

**Questions**

1. What made Paul upset?
2. What did the council say to Paul?
3. What did Paul say about God?
4. According to Paul, what does God command all people to do?
5. Why did some people make fun of Paul?

## Paul in Ephesus

Acts 19:1-20

Paul arrived in the city of Ephesus. For three months he spoke boldly with the people. He tried to convince them about the Kingdom of God. Some of them were stubborn and would not believe. They said evil things about the Way of the Lord. But Paul continued to preach for two years. Eventually, all the people who lived in the province heard the word of the Lord.

God performed miracles through Paul. Then seven brothers also tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus. They said to the evil spirits, “I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches.” But the evil spirit said to them, “I know Jesus, and I know about Paul. But who are you?” The man with the evil spirit attacked them. The brothers ran away wounded. All the people who lived in Ephesus heard about this. They were all filled with fear.

The word of the Lord kept spreading and growing stronger.

**Questions**

1. What did Paul do in Ephesus?
2. What did some people say about the Way of the Lord?
3. What did God do through Paul?
4. What happened to the seven brothers?
5. Why were the people filled with fear?

## Paul's says goodbye to the elders of Ephesus

Acts 20:17-38

Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus, “You know how I spent the whole time I was with you. With humility and tears, I did my work as the Lord's servant.

“Now, I am going to Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit has warned me that prison and troubles wait for me. But my own life is worth nothing to me. I only want to finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do. The work is to declare the Good News about the grace of God.

“I know that you will never see me again. Keep watch over yourselves. Look after the flock which the Holy Spirit has placed in your care. I have shown you that by working hard we must help the weak. The Lord Jesus himself said, ‘There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.’”

When Paul finished, he prayed with them. They were all crying as they said goodbye. They were sad because he had said they would never see him again.

**Questions**

1. Where did Paul say he was going to?
2. What work had the Lord Jesus given to Paul?
3. What did Paul say the elders needed to do?
4. What had the Lord Jesus said about giving and receiving?
5. Why were the believers sad?

## Paul visits the believers in Jerusalem

Acts 21:17-26

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, the believers welcomed him warmly. He gave a report to the elders of what God had done among the Gentiles. After hearing him, they all praised God.

Then they said, “Brother Paul, thousands of Jews have become believers. They are devoted to the Law. They have been told that you have been teaching Jews to abandon the Law of Moses.

“Go with these four men to the Temple. Join them in their ceremony. In this way, everyone will know what has been told about you is not true.”

So, Paul went with the men to the Temple.

**Questions**

1. What did Paul tell the elders?
2. What did the elders say to Paul?
3. Why did Paul go with the four men to the Temple?

## Paul is arrested in the Temple

Acts 21:27-36

Some people saw Paul in the Temple. They seized Paul. They shouted, “This is the man who teaches against the people of Israel. He opposes the Law of Moses and this Temple. And now he has even brought some Gentiles into the Temple. He has defiled this holy place!” They dragged him out of the Temple.

The commander of the army took some soldiers. He rushed down to the crowd. When the people saw him with the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. The commander arrested him.

Then he asked, “Who is this man? What has he done?” There was a lot of confusion. The commander could not find out exactly what had happened. He ordered his men to take Paul up into the fort. The soldiers had to carry Paul because of the mob. They were screaming, “Kill him!”

**Questions**

1. What did the people accuse Paul of doing and saying?
2. What did they do when they saw the soldiers?
3. What did the commander ask the people?
4. Why did the soldiers carry Paul?

## The case against Paul

Acts 24:1-23

The High Priest went with some elders to see the governor. They made these charges against Paul: “Your Excellency! We found this man to be a dangerous nuisance. He starts riots among Jews all over the world. He also tried to defile the Temple. So, we arrested him. If you question this man, you yourself will be able to learn what we are accusing him of.”

The governor then motioned to Paul to speak. Paul said, “The Jews cannot give you proof of the accusations they now bring against me. I am being tried by you today for believing that the dead will rise to life.”

Then Felix brought the hearing to a close. He ordered the officer in charge of Paul to keep him under guard. He also ordered to give him some freedom and allow his friends to provide for his needs.

**Questions**

1. Where did the High Priest and the elders go?
2. What did they accuse Paul of doing?
3. What did they suggest that the governor should do?
4. What did Paul say in defence?
5. What did the governor tell the officer to do?

## Paul appeals to the emperor

Acts 25:1-12

Later, the chief priests and leaders brought their charges against Paul again. They begged the governor to bring Paul to Jerusalem. They had made a plot to kill him on the way.

The governor asked Paul, “Would you be willing to go to Jerusalem? There you would be tried on these charges before me.”

Paul said, “If I have done something for which I deserve the death penalty, I do not ask to escape it. But if there is no truth in the charges brought against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to the emperor.”

The governor answered, “You have appealed to the emperor in Rome. So, you will go to the emperor.”

**Questions**

1. Why did the priest and leaders want Paul to be brought to Jerusalem?
2. Why was Paul not willing to go to Jerusalem?
3. Who did Paul appeal to?
4. Where did the governor say Paul must go?

## Paul sails for Rome

Acts 27:1―28:11

Paul and some other prisoners were sent to Rome by ship. After the ship had sailed for several days, a very strong wind started blowing. The wind kept on blowing very hard for many days. The storm was very violent. The people on the ship finally gave up all hope of being saved.

Then Paul said to them, “Last night an angel of God said to me, ‘Don't be afraid! You must stand before the emperor. God will also spare the lives of all those who are sailing with you.’ So, take heart, men! I trust in God that it will be just as I was told.”

The ship went aground. It was broken to pieces by the violence of the waves. However, there was land close-by. All the people swam ashore, and they were saved.

After staying in that place for three months, they continued their journey to Rome.

**Questions**

1. Why did the people give up hope of being saved?
2. Why did Paul tell the people not to be afraid?
3. How did the people get to the shore?

## Paul in Rome

Acts 28:16-31

Paul arrived in Rome. He waited there to be tried by the emperor. He was allowed to live by himself with a soldier guarding him.

For two years Paul lived in a place he rented, and there he welcomed all who came to see him. He preached about the Kingdom of God. He taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke with all boldness and freedom.

**Questions**

1. Where did Paul stay in Rome?
2. What did Paul do while he waited for his trial?