



BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

Easter 3 (A)

April 19, 2026

RCL: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-3,10-17; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

Opening Prayer |

Ever living God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Context |

The scenes captured in Acts 2:14a, 36-41 are situated during a time of profound growth and development of the early church in Roman Palestine. Christianity began as a religious movement of Jesus's followers within Judaism. In Acts 2, Peter is addressing a Jewish crowd who had witnessed the disciples "speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability" during the moment of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). The crowd is diverse, made up of Jewish people from all across the Mediterranean and Levant. Most likely, those in the crowd would have traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish festival of Pentecost (which literally means "fifty" in Greek). This festival was one "commemorating the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai fifty days after Exodus from Egypt" (*Feasting on the Word: Year A*, Vol 2, 401). During that event, the crowd was "bewildered...amazed, and astonished" because they "heard them speaking" in their native language (Acts 2:6-7). Some in the crowd curiously wonder aloud about the meaning of this sign, while others suppose the disciples are drunk.

Peter stands to address these twin concerns. First, Peter assures the crowd that he and the disciples are not drunk, but in fact that they are all witnessing the fulfilment of the words of the prophet, Joel: "God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2:17, quoting Joel 2:28). Peter further summarizes Jesus's ministry—his life, death, and resurrection—and contextualizes it as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophesy and God's

divine plan. Today's lection, Acts 2:14a, 36-41, primarily focuses on how the crowd responds to Peter's message. Many in the crowd are emotionally moved and ask Peter and the disciples, "What should we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter instructed them to repent and be baptized, resulting in "about three thousand persons" added to their fledgling community. Moreover, the book of Acts, as a whole, sets the stage for the development and spread of Jesus's message from Jerusalem throughout the Mediterranean and beyond, as the faith expands beyond Jewish followers to include Gentile converts.

Theological Reflection |

This week marks the third week in our celebration of Easter. Christians around the world gather yearly to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This year, Catholics and Protestants celebrate Easter on April 5, while Orthodox Christians celebrate a week later, on April 12. Yet, as one church, we boldly proclaim that Jesus Christ is not dead, but is risen. In the Episcopal Church, during this season, we hear the sonorous responsorial proclamation. The celebrant says, "Alleluia. Christ is risen." And with loud cheer the congregation responds, "The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia" (Book of Common Prayer, 355).

Peter once denied being associated with Jesus, yet now, he boldly proclaims that Jesus is "Lord and Messiah" to a large crowd (Acts 2:36). Many in the crowd "are cut to the heart" and respond to Peter's message with repentance, seeking baptism. Miraculously, thousands are added to the fledgling community that would become the Church.

What makes the Easter story compelling is how the resurrection reveals that Jesus is both Lord and Messiah, overturning all expectations of what the Messiah would be. What exactly did it mean to call Jesus "Lord and Messiah"? The title "Lord," *Kyrios* in the Greek, is a common address in the New Testament for God, meaning master or ruler. In the Roman Empire, *Kyrios* was used to address Caesar, the supreme Roman ruler. Peter describes the resurrected Jesus as "exalted at the right hand of God," making his "enemies" his "footstool" (Acts 2:32-35). Peter's proclamation presents Jesus as Lord over the cosmos, transcending Caesar's earthly domain. Ultimate allegiance belongs not to earthly powers but to Jesus, who is the true Lord over all.

The second title, "Messiah," further clarifies the kind of Lord Jesus is. His title of "Christ" derives from the Greek *Christos*, the Greek rendering of the Hebrew *Mashiah* (from which comes our English word, Messiah), meaning "the anointed one." Jewish communities living in Roman-occupied Palestine had long awaited the messianic figure foretold by the prophets: the one who would liberate them from Roman rule and restore David's kingdom. But Jesus did not fit the messianic mold expected by Peter's audience. Jesus ushers in a religious movement that confronts and subverts the Jewish temple leaders, even as it challenges social and political divisions, signaling that the Kingdom of God is already present *and* not yet fully realized (see Mark 1:15). Moreover, Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection reveal the upside-

down nature of the Kingdom of God, in which life comes from death, and what seemed like the destruction of all hope actually ushers in salvation.

Taken together, the titles “Lord” and “Messiah” work to affirm Jesus’s divinity and sovereignty over creation, reaffirming that Jesus is the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. It is this message and revelation that convicted Peter’s audience to respond in repentance, baptism, and even sharing all they held in common (Acts 2:38, 41-42). The crowd could have chalked the events of Pentecost up to a mysterious supernatural event or mere human folly. Yet instead, many listened to Peter’s sermon and, through it, came to see that Jesus was not merely a man, but Lord and Messiah.

Today, the resurrection still confronts expectations of power and challenges all to take seriously that Jesus is Lord and Messiah, the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation. Like those who came to follow Jesus after Peter’s preaching, Christians today are called to live out their baptismal vows to continue “in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers” (Book of Common Prayer, 304; Acts 2:42).

Reflection Questions |

- How do the titles Lord and Messiah shape who you understand Jesus is? What does it mean to you to worship him?
- Peter proclaims that Jesus is “Lord,” a title also used for Caesar in the Roman Empire. What does it mean today to give ultimate allegiance to Jesus as Lord in a world shaped by many competing loyalties and powers?
- Jesus did not fit the expected mold of the Messiah. How does God challenge our expectations of power, leadership, or success through the example of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, even today?

Faith in Practice |

Peter’s sermon led many to seek baptism in Christ. This week, spend some time reflecting on your own baptismal promises. Read the Baptismal Covenant in the Book of Common Prayer (p. 304–305) and ask where God might be inviting you to renew your commitment to Jesus, Lord and Messiah. Consider one small, concrete way you can live out your baptism this week through prayer, service, reconciliation, or witness.

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