

ACTS – CHAPTER 2

The Holy Spirit is Poured Out on the Church

The only biblical reference to the events of Pentecost is **Acts 2:1–3**. It reminds us of the Last Supper, when the disciples are together. At the Last Supper they witness the end of the Messiah's earthly ministry. At Pentecost, they witness the birth of the New Testament church in the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell all believers.

"Pentecost" is the Greek name for a festival known in the Old Testament as the **Feast of Weeks** (**Leviticus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:9**), which celebrated the end of the grain harvest. The word "pentecost" means "50", referring to the 50 days that have elapsed since the wave offering of Passover.

On Mount Sinai, the Word of God was given to the Israelites at Shavuot, the **Feast of Weeks**. When the Jews accepted the Word of God, they became His servants. This Old Testament feast revealed *"a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ"* (**Colossians 2:17**).

After Jesus ascended, the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. The disciples became witnesses for Christ. Jews celebrate a harvest on Shavuot, and the church celebrates a harvest of newborn souls on Pentecost.

Let's look at Joel's prophecy in: Joel 2:28-32. Fast forward to the promise of the Holy Spirit in Christ's last words before His ascension. **Acts 1:8**

Pentecost signals the beginning of the church age.

A. The initial experience of the filling of the Holy Spirit.

1. (Acts 2:1-4a) The disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit.

V1 The Day of Pentecost had fully come: Pentecost is one of Israel's 3 major agricultural festivals and the 2nd great feast of their year. Tradition taught that **Pentecost** marked the day when the Law was given to Israel through Moses on Sinai. They sometimes called **Pentecost** *shimchath torah* or "Joy of the Law."

On the OT **Day of Pentecost** Israel received the Law; on the NT **Day of Pentecost** the Church received the Spirit. **It is 10 days** after Jesus ascended (**Acts 1:3**), and commanded them to wait for the coming Holy Spirit Who would empower them to fulfill His Commission. But they had to wait a full 10 days.

Can presume God was doing a work in them during those days?

What this passage tells us about the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit is promised. · The Holy Spirit is worth waiting for.
- The Holy Spirit comes as He wills, not necessarily according to our expectation.
- The Holy Spirit can come on individuals and also on groups (**Acts 2:4, 4:31, 10:44**).
- The Holy Spirit is often given as God deals with the flesh and there is a dying to self.

They were all with one accord in one place: They were gathered together with the same heart, the same love for God, the same trust in His promise. **Before we can be filled**, we must recognize our emptiness, our need. By gathering together for prayer, in obedience, they did just that. They knew they did not have the resources in themselves to do what they had to do; they had to rely on the work of God.

V2 Suddenly there came a sound from heaven: Heaven "ouranos" refers to the sky and perhaps by extension, heaven, where God dwells. It was the sound of the Holy Spirit being poured out on them.

The association of the sound of a **rushing mighty wind**, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is unusual.

Rushing, "pherō" Means to be conveyed or borne, with the suggestion of force or speed. **Mighty** "biaios" Something violent or forcible. **Wind** "echos" Refers to the roar of the sea's waves.

In the Hebrew and Greek, the word *spirit* is the same word for *breath* or **wind** (also true in Latin). The **sound** of this **wind** would make those who knew the Hebrew Scriptures, think of the Holy Spirit.

- In **Genesis 1:1-2**, the Spirit of God is the breath/wind of God, blowing over the waters of the newly created earth. · In **Genesis 2:7**, the Spirit of God is the breath/wind of God, blowing life into newly created man. · In **Ezekiel 37:9-10**, the Spirit of God is the breath/wind of God, moving over the dry bones of Israel bringing them life and strength.

Scriptural references to the power of wind, understood to be under God's control, abound. **Exodus 10:13; Psalm 18:42 and Isaiah 11:15** in the OT and **Matthew 14:23–32** in the NT are examples.

V3 There appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, and one sat upon each of them: This could be connected with John the Baptist's prophecy that Jesus would "...baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire". (**Matthew 3:11**).

What does fire represent in the Bible?



The presence of God physically manifested as fire. **Exodus 40:38; Exodus 13:21; Psalm 105:39; Zechariah 2:5.** It symbolized **the guiding presence of God** among the people, His power, holiness, and protection over His people.

Fire demonstrates **God's anger and righteous judgment** over humanity. In **Deuteronomy 4:24**, God's **supremacy over false idols** is demonstrated as fire. In the condemnation of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see fire used in **God's punishment for sin (Genesis 19:24).**

In the last days, fire is pictured as **a tool of judgment that both burns up the dross and purifies the holy: 1 Corinthians 3:13-15**

Foreshadowing the fires of hell, John the Baptist explained Jesus' work in the final days. (**Matthew 3:12**).

The idea of **fire is purification**, as a refiner uses fire to make pure gold; **Zechariah 13:9; 1 Peter 1:6-9.**

Fire can burn away what is temporary, leaving only what will last.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is not just for power, but for purity.

Sat upon each of them. Sat "kathizō" "to set or appoint; to confer the kingdom upon", the idea of a certain *permanence of position and condition*.

How is this different from what we see in the OT regarding the Holy Spirit's dealings with men?

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times was selective and temporary...reserved for prophets and kings and those whom He used in certain situations to do His work. But He was working in the lives of people to do much of the same type of thing as seen in **John 16:7-1**.

In the Old Testament there was the anticipation of the coming of Christ through the tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices. The Holy Spirit worked to enlighten, convict, and lead people to believe the message, as it existed in OT times.

He obviously had to regenerate people, but not from the indwelling presence as today. Under the Old Covenant, the Holy Spirit rested on God's people more as a *nation*, that is, Israel.

Under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit rests upon God's people as *individuals*. This strange phenomenon had never happened before and doesn't happen again in the Bible, but emphasized the point that the Spirit of God was present with and in and upon *each individual*. Not just sitting there, ready to hop off and move on...but to stay permanently!

V4a And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit: The true gift was being **filled with the Holy Spirit**. This was so essential for the work of the community of early Christians, that Jesus actually said that it was *better* for Him to leave the earth bodily so He could send the Holy Spirit (**John 16:7**).

2. (4b-13) The phenomenon of speaking in tongues.

V4b And began to speak with other tongues: In response to the filling, those present (not only the twelve) **began to speak with other tongues**. "glōssa" A language.

In this case, languages that they were never taught, and they spoke them, **as the Spirit gave them utterance**. "apophthengomai" To make a pronouncement, not in everyday speech, but to put forth or forcibly declare. The verb is used in Greek literature in connection with *spiritually prompted speech*, not just a translation into other languages.

V5 Devout men, from every nation under heaven: The multitude from many nations gathered in Jerusalem because of the Feast of Pentecost. Thousands of Jews had gathered, so there was a captive audience for God to communicate the Spirit's presence, as well as the birthing of the church.

V6 And when this sound occurred: A crowd quickly gathered, being attracted either the sound of the *rushing wind* or the sound of speaking in **other tongues**. They heard the Christians speaking in their own languages...languages foreign to those who spoke them.

V7 Are not all these who speak Galileans? Another reason for their surprise was the prejudice with

which they typically viewed Galileans (**John 1:46; 7:15**)...that they were uncultured and poor speakers. Since Jesus was from Galilee (**Matthew 21:11**), as were many of His disciples, one way to insult the group would have been to dismissively lump them together as "Galileans."

This was a way of implying that they were a group of yokels. **For others**, this was more reason to be impressed with their ability to speak so eloquently in other languages.

Reverse the Curse? Man united against their Creator, so He confused their languages (**Genesis 11:1-9**), making them fill the earth, but hindering their ability to gather into one rebellious body. But the Lord's judgment of them was not His last word for man. From the beginning, God meant to unite men from all places into a people to proclaim His glory.

Initially, He called the people of Israel, as His witness to the nations (**Deuteronomy 4:1-8; Deuteronomy 31:9-13; Joshua 4:19-24, 1 Kings 8:59-60, Isaiah 56:7**). Under the old covenant, the praise of God was limited mainly to one people, but He wanted to make Himself known to all. Israel failed in this, so the prophets looked to the day when the Lord would unite people from all nations to praise Him (**Isaiah 60**).

The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost began this anticipated day, when the church received the firstfruits of redemption. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon all flesh. The miracle of tongues, where everyone heard the Gospel in his own language, was evidence God was breaking down the divisions imposed at Babel. The true Israel is defined by common faith in the Messiah. Differences remain, but the power of the Spirit breaks through for the sake of the Gospel. The reversal of Babel has begun, as the elect from every nation gather before the Lord's throne to worship Him (**Revelation 7:9-12**).



V11 We hear them speaking in our tongues/languages the wonderful works of God: This is what the crowd heard them speak. As a result, **all** were **amazed and perplexed**.

In addition to the miraculous speaking in foreign tongues so they could understand the message of the apostles, was the bold preaching of Peter to a Jewish audience. The effect of the sermon was powerful, as we shall see next week.

V12 Whatever could this mean? They knew something was happening...but what? The disciples declared the praises of God, thanking Him with all their might in unknown tongues. The gathered crowd merely *overheard* what the disciples exuberantly declared to God. The real preaching came after.

V13 Others mocking...They are full of new wine. Some dismissed them as being drunk with wine, but when people are drunk, they act like fools, stumble and fall. They slur their words...but here the different languages are spoken clearly with complete understanding.

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