

Acts 2

What was Pentecost (v. 1)? The day of Pentecost was the first day of an annual spring feast at which the Jews presented the first-fruits of their wheat harvest to God. It was one of three annual pilgrimage feasts (in addition to the festivals of Passover and Tabernacles) which every Jewish male was required to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate (Exodus 34:22-23). "Pentecost" is a Greek word that means fiftieth. This feast fell on the fiftieth day after Passover.

Since every Jewish male was required to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem every year for these three feasts what do you think Jerusalem must have looked like at this time? Jews from all over the known world choked the city. One writer claimed that the population of Jerusalem swelled from 50,000 to 250,000.

They were together in one place (vv. 1-4). Who is "they"? The believers of 1:15 -- Galileans i.e. local Jews. **What was the first thing that happened?** The sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven (not actual wind). **Second?** (What seemed to be) Tongues of fire separated and came to rest on each of them. **Next?** They were filled with the Holy Spirit - all 120 of them.

What happened to them when they received the Holy Spirit (v. 4)? They were given the ability to speak actual foreign languages that they had never studied which was clearly a work of the Spirit -- "as the Spirit enabled them." This was evidence of a supernatural work..... the grand entrance of the Holy Spirit onto the scene.

How did the crowd react (vv. 7-13)? They were amazed to discover Galileans speaking in the native languages of the remote regions from which they had come. Some were amazed, perplexed and inquisitive. Others ridiculed them for being drunk. Unregenerate men are often ready to offer a natural explanation for spiritual phenomena.

What were they saying when they spoke in tongues (v. 11)? Declaring the wonders of God. Not calling for repentance, not proclaiming the gospel, they were praising God.

They all received the Holy Spirit. Up to now, the Holy Spirit had been present during Old Testament times but how did He work? He came upon men in the Old Testament on a temporary basis for a specific purpose or a specific length of time, but not as an abiding resident. He had previously been with the disciples but now He took up His residence in them on a permanent basis (John 14:17).

Pentecost was the only time in Acts when the Holy Spirit came with wind-like sound and fire-like appearance.

What may have been the point of these outward signs? Why were they necessary? The Jews needed a spectacular initial entrance of the Holy Spirit to realize that this was what Jesus promised. They needed convincing evidence that something supernatural had occurred. There must be no room for doubt that the promised Holy Spirit had arrived as promised.

It is understandable why God-fearing Jews, with their already authenticated Old Testament, would have required a sign. They would have wanted strong proof that God was now giving new revelation that seemed on the surface to contradict their Scriptures.¹

The baptism of the Spirit did something God had never done before in history. It united believers with Christ in a new relationship: as fellow members of the spiritual body of Christ. This was the birthday of the church.

How would you describe what Peter did next (vv. 14-41)? He took on a leadership mantle and confronted the Jews with the truth about Jesus. Note that since he was talking to Jews (v. 14), he quoted the Old Testament prophet Joel (who stated that salvation is by faith alone -- v. 21) whom the Jews would be familiar with. His performance was bold and courageous, clearly the result of being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

What was the heart of his message? Jesus is Messiah (Savior) and Lord. God sent Him, you crucified Him. God raised Him from the dead and we are witnesses of that miracle. He is now seated at the right hand of God. He has poured out the Holy Spirit on us just as Joel prophesied. And David collaborates everything I have said.

Is this the same Peter that we saw in the Gospels? The one who denied Christ 3 times? What's the difference? Acts 1:8 – the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

How did the people respond (v. 37)? They were convicted... cut to the heart. They realized they had missed the Messiah. They realized they were guilty of murder – this Jesus they had slain was truly God's beloved son. How can they possibly escape judgment? They undoubtedly felt hopeless and helpless.

What was Peter's solution to their dilemma (v. 38)? Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and you too will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What does repent mean? Turning away from, changing of direction. Repentance involves a change of mind and heart first and secondarily a change of conduct. The people who heard Peter on that day formerly thought of Jesus as mere man, now they were asked to change their hearts and minds and accept Him as Lord (Deity) and Christ (promised Messiah). To do this would bring salvation.

The Greek word translated repentance (*metanoia*) literally means a change of outlook, to reconsider.² It begins with acknowledging your guilt. Someone has said that repentance is nothing more than taking sides with God against yourself.

Why is repentance an essential part of salvation?

What was the end result of Peter's sermon (v. 41)? The hearts of the listeners were opened, they followed Peter's instructions and 3000 were saved.

Did they receive the Holy Spirit when they believed? Yes. Did they have the wind, fire and tongues experience of Pentecost? No

What does that say? The events of Pentecost did not establish a set methodology for receiving the Holy Spirit. There is no set pattern, no secret recipe, no magic steps to follow. Pentecost was the only time in Acts when the Holy Spirit came with wind-like sound and fire-like appearance. Subsequent to Pentecost, there are four communities of believers in the Book of Acts (chapters 2, 8, 10 and 19), and the order of events in connection with their reception of the Holy Spirit is different in each case. God is not predictable; He does not do miracles the same way every time, e.g. Jesus opened the eyes of the blind four times and each time the way He did it was different.

Application: We each have a unique and different conversion story to tell.

What was the common denominator between these two groups when it came to receiving the Holy Spirit? Repentant and surrendered hearts. Hearts that were right before God (Psalm 51:16-17).

When the feast of Pentecost was over, what would have been the result of these Jews from all over the known world witnessing this event? They would return to their homelands with a message of the supernatural events and the message of Peter. They are now witnesses (1:8). They will be declaring, "Let me tell you what I have seen, heard, experienced." Which is not unlike us. We are scattered all over our world; we are witnesses and we have the same Gospel message to declare.

What elements of Peter's speech should be a model for the way we do evangelism?

What characterized the lives of these new converts (v. 42)? What did they do? How did they live? They devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching (desire to know the truth), to fellowship, the breaking of bread (which probably included the Lord's Supper as well as eating a meal together) and prayer. They developed a sense of community.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>) p. 36

² Ibid. p. 56