

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

Ice-Breaker

1. What are you usually doing at 9 a.m. on a weekday? How about on the weekend?
2. What has been your best experience with public speaking? What about your worst?

Scripture Passage

Acts 2:1-24

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^a as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."^b

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷"In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

¹⁹I will show wonders in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.^c

²²"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,^d put him to death by

nailing him to the cross.²⁴But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

a [4] Or languages; also in verse 11

b [13] Or sweet wine

c [21] Joel 2:28-32

d [23] Or of those not having the law (that is, Gentiles)

Bible Study

1. Why did God pour out the gift of the Holy Spirit on the followers of Jesus?
 - to bless them with a spiritual high
 - to empower them to be bold witnesses
 - to serve as a miraculous sign to draw others
 - to get the church off to an explosive start
 - other: _____
2. What would you say was the most impressive evidence of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost?
 - the sudden, mysterious "wind" that filled the house
 - the tongues of fire that came to rest on each of them
 - the believers all speaking in unknown tongues or languages
 - the crowd hearing the disciples declaring the wonders of God in their own languages
 - the giving of prophecies, visions and dreams to all God's people
 - the responseÑ3,000 converts in one day!
3. In comparison to what the disciples experienced when the Holy Spirit came upon them, how would you describe your past experience with the Holy Spirit?
 - much more tame
 - similar to theirs
 - different, but just as real
 - something I can't explain
 - other: _____
4. How would you describe your experience with the Holy Spirit now?
 - on fire
 - a glowing ember
 - up in the air
 - gone with the wind
 - other: _____
5. When are you most aware of the Holy Spirit?
 - reading Scripture
 - sharing in a group like this
 - in praise and singing
 - praying with others
 - in time spent alone with God
 - spending time in nature
 - at church
 - other: _____
6. From Peter's message to the crowd, especially his conclusion in verses 36-39, how would you explain to someone what it means to become a Christian?

Reference Notes

2:1 the day of Pentecost. This was the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:15-21; Deuteronomy 16:9-12) held 50 days after Passover. Originally a kind of Thanks-giving Day for gathered crops, it came to be associated with the commemoration of the giving of the Law at Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17). Jewish tradition held that when God gave the Law to Moses, a single voice spoke which was heard by all the nations of the world in their own language. Luke may be alluding to that in this story. Pentecost was a celebration to which thousands of Jews from all over the empire would attend.

2:2-4 The Greek word for "wind" and "spirit" is the same, hence the symbolism of the Spirit coming like a great wind. Fire is often associated with divine appearances (Exodus 3:2; 19:18). John the Baptist said Jesus would baptize his followers with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16) symbolizing the cleansing, purifying effect of the Spirit. What is important here is that tongues served as a sign to the crowds of a supernatural event, the point of which was Jesus Christ.

2:4 filled with the Holy Spirit. This phrase is found elsewhere (Acts 4:8,31; 13:52; Ephesians 5:18) indicating a repeatable experience. Here, however, it is clearly associated with the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 1:5) which is an experience new converts enter into upon acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 11:5-6).

2:5-8 The disciples apparently made their way to the temple where they attracted a large crowd that was puzzled over how they could speak in their native dialects.

2:9-11 The catalog of nations shows that people from all over the known world heard the news of Christ from the beginning of the church. These pilgrims would soon be returning home with the news of all they had seen and heard. **Parthians, Medes and Elamites ... Mesopotamia.** Present day Iran and Iraq, to the east of Jerusalem. These Jews traced their roots back to the Assyrian overthrow of Israel and the Babylonian overthrow of Judea seven and five centuries beforehand respectively.

Judea. Either the immediate environs around Jerusalem is in view, or Luke is thinking of the days under David and Solomon when the land of Israel stretched from Egypt to the west to the Euphrates River to the east. **Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia.** Present day Turkey to the north of Jerusalem. Much of Acts takes place in this region. **Egypt ... Libya near Cyrene.** To the west of Jerusalem on the northern coast of Africa. **Rome.** About 1,500 miles by ship from Jerusalem. **converts to Judaism.** Judaism's high morality and developed spirituality attracted many Gentiles from the immoral, pagan practices of other religions although the requirement of circumcision kept many men from becoming full members of the Jewish community. **Cretans.** An island south of Greece in the Mediterranean Sea. **Arabs.** The Nabatean kingdom was south of Jerusalem with borders on Egypt and the Euphrates.

2:17-21 This passage quotes, with minor changes, Joel 2:28-32 as it was found in the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament (The Septuagint), the version of the Old Testament with which the disciples were familiar.

2:17 In the last days. Peter changed the original "afterwards" to this phrase indicating that the beginning of the end was occurring. In the New Testament, "the last days" are the period from Jesus' ascension to his return. **on all people.** Since it is not until chapter 10 that Peter realizes the gospel is for Gentiles, Peter probably thought this phrase meant that all Jews everywhere (and not just prophets, kings and priests as in the Old Testament) could now experience God's Spirit.

2:19 wonders ... and signs. The tongues were a sign of God's activity. The cosmic changes he

alludes to are couched in apocalyptic language. In the Old Testament, such figurative language was used to describe God's judgment upon specific nations (see Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:10-11; Amos 8:9-10) though they anticipate a real catastrophic rendering of nature at the final judgment. The immediate application in mind might be the darkness that overtook the land during Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:44).

2:20 day of the Lord. Jewish tradition divided history into two periods: present age, and age to come in which God would set up his kingdom. The dividing line between the two eras was the cataclysmic "day of the Lord" where God would judge the world and exalt Israel (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6ff; Amos 5:18; Zephaniah 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). What the crowd witnessed points to the fact that this day is at hand; the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit shows God has broken into history; the time of salvation and judgment is now.

2:22 The fact of Jesus' miracles is not debated. The stories of his work in Galilee had been widely reported (Mark 3:8; Luke 12:1; Acts 26:26). What was debated was the source of his power; early on some leaders accused him of being possessed by Satan (Mark 3:22). **miracles.** Literally, "powers" (Luke 5:17; 10:13). The outward manifestations of Jesus' authority. **wonders.** A word commonly used to refer to "an abnormal occurrence portending the approach of some event of special importance"(Williams). **signs.** This word clearly points to the fact that Jesus' miracles were not ends in themselves but pointers to the nature of his identity and mission. It is the favorite word for the miracles in John's Gospel (John 2:11; 4:54; 6:26).

2:23 Human responsibility and God's sovereignty are both asserted. Jesus' death was the plan of God, but carried out through the sinful motives of the leaders of Israel. **wicked men.** Literally, "lawless men," that is, the Romans who actually carried out the Crucifixion. They were Gentiles who did not have the Law of God.

2:24-28 Death could not hold onto Jesus (v. 24) because the Messiah would not be subject to death (v. 27). This is supported by a quote from Psalm 16:8-11 which, in its original setting, was the prayer of a righteous person rejoicing in the fact that because God supported him, he could be assured that he would not be left in Sheol but enjoy God's presence forever. Some rabbis viewed this as a messianic psalm providing a precedence for Peter to read it as one that foretold the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

Caring Time

How can this group pray for you?