

The Book of Acts

Chapter 2^a

¹When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind,^b and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire,^c and *one* sat upon each of them.

^a Ephram the Syrian was one of the early church fathers. He was known for his hymns of praise and wrote the following in reference to the fall of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost:

The Scent of Paradise

When the blessed apostles
were gathered together
the place shook
and the scent of Paradise,
having recognized its home,
poured forth its perfumes,
delighting the heralds
by whom
the guests are instructed
and come to his banquet;
eagerly he awaits their arrival
for he is the Lover of mankind.

(Taken from the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Vol. NT V, p. 20.)

^b Notice that the *sound* of wind was there, but (apparently) there was no air movement. It was clearly supernatural. Why wind? In both Greek and Hebrew the words for "wind", "breath", and "spirit" are almost the same. (**More Study: Confirm this.**) God "breathed" life into Adam. (*Genesis 2:7*) Jesus "breathed" on the disciples saying, "... *receive the Holy Spirit*" (*John 20:22*) and now, ten days later, it was fulfilled. The breath of God blew into the room and filled them all.

^c Why tongues of fire? The Pentecostal/Charismatic (P/C) expressions of the Christian faith tend to be categorized by their use of the gift of tongues, but this characterization does not get to the real heart of what defines that movement. The word "fire" does a better job. God used tongues of fire when He baptized the 120 in the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit brings the fire of passion and zeal into the life of the saint. This fire is why P/C churches are famous for active services, full of passion and emotion.

⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.^a ⁶And when this sound occurred,^b the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. ⁷Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?”^c ⁸And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining

There is another aspect to the fire of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Revelation the two witnesses of Chapter 11 “kill” anyone seeking to do them harm with fire that comes from their mouths (Rev 11:5). When an unbeliever hears the word of God, the Holy Spirit uses that word to convict him/her of sin and kill the fallen man. In this way fire comes from the mouths of the church (symbolically represented by the two witnesses) and kills the enemies of Jesus, transforming them into saints.

^a Here we begin to see how God spent thousands of years planning and setting things up for the advent of the church. By scattering the Jews across the known world, He set the stage for the establishment of the church in the world. We must always remember that judgment is always redemptive in purpose. The Jews were scattered throughout the world because Israel sinned and so God judged them. Yet, that very judgment laid the foundation on which the church was built. Because the Jews were scattered, these men were born in foreign lands and grew up speaking foreign languages. Because they were Jews, they were in Jerusalem at just the right time to hear the 120 speaking in tongues. God set it up so perfectly! The church was born and as soon as these men – newly minted Christians – went back to their homes, the church suddenly found herself spread across the known world. All this in one fell swoop! When God does something, He does it right!

^b The people were reacting to both the sound of a “mighty wind” (apparently this noise wasn’t limited to the house) and the words that were being spoken.

More Study: [Look up the significance of the Day of Pentecost in the Jewish tradition. How does it fit in with these events when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church?](#)

^c This is equivalent to saying, “Aren’t these guys just a bunch of unschooled hillbillies?”

Cyrene,^a visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,
¹¹Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own
tongues the wonderful works of God.”¹² So they were all
amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could
this mean?”¹³ Others mocking said, “They are full of new
wine.”^b

¹⁴But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and
said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let
this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵For these are not
drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day.
¹⁶But this^c is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

*¹⁷ ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days,^d says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;’^e*

^a This list is very detailed and covers a large part of the known world. Luke even breaks it down to a specific region of Libya. It is likely that he actually interviewed a good share of these people in person.

^b It is conceivable that one person or even two could, in a bout of decadence, be drunk that early in the morning, but there were 120 people here who had just been Baptized in the Holy Spirit and were speaking in tongues. The accusation that they were drunk just didn't hold water. Neither did it explain how all these people were speaking coherently using languages in which they had no background. Peter brought this out as he began his sermon.

^c Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, is making a clear connection between the phenomenon (of the 120 speaking in tongues) that the crowd was observing, and the event of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that Joel referred to. This is strong support for the Pentecostal position that the gift of tongues can usually be expected to accompany the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Please see Appendix A for a further discussion of that claim.)

^d The gifts of the Spirit -- manifestations of His power -- are all associated with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The “*last days*” referred to in this passage spans the entire church age that we are living in now. (See *1 Corinthians 12*)

^e During the Old Testament period the Holy Spirit would fall on and fill individuals here and there. When the Holy Spirit came, men like Saul and David had their personalities changed (*1 Samuel 10:9; 16:13; Psalms 138:3*). Saul even prophesied like a prophet. Yet the gifts and

*Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,
Your old men shall dream dreams.^a*

¹⁸ *And on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy.*

¹⁹ *I will show wonders in heaven above
And signs in the earth beneath:
Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.*

²⁰ *The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of
the LORD.*

²¹ *And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Shall be saved.'*

^{22c} Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs^b which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also

power that the Holy Spirit brought to their lives was limited to their lives only. Joel was one of those people whom God chose to fill with the Holy Spirit, and here he is saying that, "Someday God is going to pour out the Holy Spirit on everyone, not just on a few like me!" Consider the implications! The Old Testament prophets did tremendous things – what if that kind of power was multiplied a billion times over? Imagine what could be accomplished! That multiplication is exactly what was beginning to happen when the Holy Spirit fell on Pentecost morning. (See *Matthew 11:11*)

^a No one gets left out. Young, old, male, female -- and servants (the lower class) -- are all included. When it says "all flesh" it really does mean everyone! Through the redemption Jesus' worked for us on the cross and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, we are made into kings and priests in the Kingdom of God. (See *Revelations 1:6*)

^b **More Study:** Can you find a list of all the signs and wonders worked by Jesus?

know—²³Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God,^a you have taken by lawless hands,^b have crucified, and put to death;²⁴whom God raised up,^c having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible^d that He should be held by it.²⁵For David says concerning Him:

'I foresaw^e the LORD always before my face,

^a So Jesus was crucified by the "determined purpose" of God? This is one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith. God planned from the beginning that Jesus would die. It wasn't just an "unfortunate event". From the moment that Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God had our redemption all planned out. Lawless men who hated God would kill the son of God and His blood would pay the penalty for our sins. I can understand part of that, but it is hard to wrap my finite mind around all of it. Much remains a mystery. Yet, I know that it is true and I have chosen to believe it!

^b We tend to think of these "lawless hands" as belonging to the Roman soldiers who did the dirty work. But the hands of the Jewish leaders were even dirtier. They had the Law of Moses and understood well that this was murder, so their sin was greater. What about the rest of us? *All* of us have sinned, *all* of us need redemption, so *all* of us helped drive the nails through Jesus' body!

More Study: [Look up and listen to Michael Rohlmeier's song "I Drove The Nails"](#).

^c The idea of someone rising from the dead was not all that foreign or unbelievable to the Jews. The Pharisees taught that there was a resurrection for all (this was the source of their conflict with the Sadducees). The ancient prophets Elijah and Elisha had both raised individuals from the dead and a man was resurrected when his dead body was thrown on top of Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:20,21). Jesus raised the young man in the town of Nain (Luke 7:11-16) and synagogue leader Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:41-56). Most notably He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-41). So, when Peter tells the crowd that Jesus has risen from the dead, the foundation had already been laid for them to believe.

Still, Theophilus, Luke's primary audience, was a Roman, not a Jew. He did not have the faith foundation that Peter's listeners had. Luke had an uphill battle to fight in convincing Theophilus that resurrection from the dead was real.

^d Peter's point here was that since the Scripture predicts the resurrection of the Messiah there was no way Jesus *could* have stayed dead. Not only that, but Jesus said that He was "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). The life of God was so strong in Him that it was not possible that death could hold Him.

^e Consider how startling this revelation must have been to these Jews who were listening to Peter. They knew these scriptures he quoted, but had always been mystified as to their meaning. Now, suddenly, it all came clear what David was talking about – he was predicting that the Messiah was going to die and be resurrected!

For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.
²⁶ *Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad;*
Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.^a
²⁷ *For You will not leave my soul in Hades,^b*
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.^c
²⁸ *You have made known to me the ways of life;*
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'

²⁹“Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Therefore, being a prophet,^d and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

‘The LORD said to my Lord,

^a For the three days Jesus' body was in the tomb, it lay there in “hope” and with the expectation of resurrection.

^b Jesus' soul descended into the place of the dead, called *Sheol* in Hebrew and *Hades* in Greek.

^c Jesus' body did not decay.

^d Usually we think of David in terms of his kingship, accomplishments, deep faith and his relationship with God. But he was also prophetically gifted and many of the Psalms he wrote reflect this.

“Sit at My right hand,
35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” ’

36“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”^a 37 Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.^b 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand^c souls were added *to them*. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine^d and fellowship,^a in the

^a The realization that they had killed the Christ – the Messiah for whom they were waiting – must have hit like a ton of bricks. Then fear. “*We rejected God! What will He do to us now?*” No wonder they asked Peter “what shall we do?” It was an open door that Peter used to teach them of God’s mercy through Jesus.

^b Peter details three actions for these Jews who wanted to make right the wrong that was done to Jesus -- *Repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Spirit*. **Repent** means to change direction and stop following a lifestyle that is contrary to God and His will. **Baptism** involves a change in identity (especially in the Jewish mind and tradition) and serves as a door of entry into a new lifestyle and changed loyalties. The act of baptism brings us into full fellowship with the body of Christ. To **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit** is to be empowered to do the work of the Kingdom and live a righteous life.

Note that the Holy Spirit is given as God’s present to us. The Holy Spirit is God’s seal that commemorates and establishes our acceptance into the Kingdom of God.

^c Three thousand converts after one sermon! That’s a pretty good start to the church.

^d Apostles are more than the evangelists. Here we see that the Twelve drew on the teaching they absorbed while Jesus was walking with them. Guided by the Holy Spirit, they taught the new

breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added^b to the church daily^c those who were being saved.

Christians about the Kingdom of God. *Doctrine* keeps us from error and keeps us from falling into lies and false beliefs promoted by Satan. Here we see the twelve apostles laying a doctrinal foundation for the church -- a foundation that has stood firm for twenty centuries.

^a They continued in "fellowship". While doctrine provides us with a safety net, the church is not defined by doctrine. The church's life is found in the deep fellowship that exists between individual Christians and with Christ. (*1 John 1:1-4*) (This is why the writer of Hebrews admonishes us against abandoning the practice of gathering together for worship and fellowship with other Christians (Heb 10:25)).

^b Every church planter needs to grab hold of this verse. It is the Lord who adds to the church, not correct methodology, good marketing or endless toil. It is God's thing, not ours (1 Cor 3:6).

^c Note that the growth of the fledgling church was constant!