

## SCRIPTURE STUDIES

**ACTS CHAPTER 2:1-11****DRAMATIC DAYS FOR THE DISCIPLES**

One of the three greatest days of all time is recorded in Acts chapter two. The three greatest days are: first, the birth of creation, second, the birth of Christ and third, the birth of the church as described in Acts chapter two. It was a most dramatic event as we shall see.

In Acts chapter one is the account of the ascending of Christ; in Acts chapter two we have the descending of the Spirit of Christ. As chapter two opens, it is now the tenth day since the ascension of the risen Savior and we read, *"They were all with one accord in one place."* (Acts 2:1) What followed that day changed the 120 Jesus followers in the Upper Room, awoke the town and eventually shook the world.

The event that took place that day in the gathering in the Upper Room in Jerusalem has, by some well meaning persons, been misinterpreted and consequently misapplied. This has caused much confusion in the church in modern times. If we misunderstand this miraculous event of momentous magnitude, we will be in error concerning the Bible teaching about the Holy Spirit. Let us, therefore, examine this chapter carefully.

**THE DRAMA IN THE UPPER ROOM**

*"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."* (Acts 2:1-4)

In order to be clear about what is said in these verses, we will analyze this section as follows: We will Examine the Word "Pentecost"; Explain the "Why" of Pentecost and Explore the "Wonder" of Pentecost

***Examining The Word "Pentecost."***

"Pentecost" is an Old Testament word. It means "fifty." Originally, Pentecost was one of seven annual feasts specified in Leviticus chapter 23 & Deuteronomy 16. The first one was the Passover celebration, commemorating the night the death angel passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. The fourth feast was the Feast of Firstfruits which was similar to our Thanksgiving. They then counted off seven weeks and celebrated again on the fiftieth day and called it "Pentecost" meaning "fifty."

When we come to the New Testament, the Jews are still celebrating those feasts and Acts 2:1 tells us that it was on the feast day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came to live in the believers in Jesus Christ. That is the day we celebrate as the Birthday of the Church.

The timing of the Spirit's coming is very significant. It was fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus who, by virtue of His resurrection, is called *"the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"* (I Cor. 15:20), that the Holy Spirit came. We read that after His resurrection He was

seen for forty days by His disciples before He ascended back to heaven (Acts 1:3). Then one-hundred twenty of His followers gathered in the Upper Room, in obedience to Jesus' command, waiting for the promised appearance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4,5) Who came on the day of the Pentecost Feast, ten days later. There are more interesting details surrounding this event; however, it is sufficient to note, for the purposes of this study, that the word "Pentecost" simply means "fifty."

### ***Exploring The "Why" of Pentecost.***

From the Christian's viewpoint, Pentecost means:

#### ***1) The fulfillment of prophecy.***

Peter, in the sermon he preached on the Day of Pentecost, explained the "why" of the happenings on the Day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:14-21) Basically he said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." What did Joel say? The prophet Joel wrote: "*And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*" (Joel 2:28, 29)

#### ***2) The result of a promise.***

Standing upon the hilltop from which He ascended back to His Father, Jesus had said, "*tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.*" (Luke 24:49) In Acts 1 Luke repeats the promise: "*He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*" (vs.4, 5)

Again, in acts 1:8 He said to them, "*you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" It is plain to see that the Holy Spirit's coming was in fulfillment of Jesus' promise, not the result of the disciples praying in the Upper Room!

#### ***3) The residency of the Holy Spirit.***

\* The Holy Spirit lives within every one who has experienced the new birth.

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit "came upon" certain persons, empowering them to do specific acts of service. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to live within believers. He is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" (Col.1:27)

Jesus said, "*I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*" (John 14:16-18)

\* The Holy Spirit is a gift.

Jesus said, "*I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper....*" (John 14:16). Peter, defending his ministry to Gentiles in Joppa to the Jewish Christian leaders in Jerusalem, said: "*The Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I*

*remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15-17)*

\* The Holy Spirit is a permanent gift.

Jesus said, *"I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever...."* (John 14:16)

4) *The formation of the Body of Christ, the Church.*

- The church is called the *"body of Christ"* - Rom.12:5; I Cor. 12:27; Eph.4:12, etc.

- The Holy Spirit is the life of that Body: *"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."* (I Cor.12:13) Also, *".... in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."* (Eph.2:22)

### ***Explaining The "Wonder" Of Pentecost.***

As we explain the wonder of Pentecost, let us be careful not to read into it that which is not there and to read out of it only that which is clearly stated there.

1) *Consider What They Sensed With The ear.*

*"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."* (Acts 2:2 nkjv; nasb; kjv)

*"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting."* (Acts 2:2 niv)

*"Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building."* (Acts 2:2 The Message)

What did the 120 in the Upper Room hear? They heard *"a sound."* What did it remind them of? *"a rushing mighty wind"* (nkjv; nasb; kjv) – *"a violent wind"* (niv) – *"a strong wind"* (The Message)

Wind is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Jesus used that symbolism in John 3:8 when talking with Nicodemus. But, what filled the house where they were meeting? Wind or sound? The sound filled the whole building. Verse 5 confirms that it was "sound" and not "wind" for people on the outside heard it and came to the meeting place: *"And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together...."*

2) *Consider what they saw with the eye.*

*"Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them."* (Acts 2:3 nkjv)

*"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them."* (Acts 2:3 kjv)

*“And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.” (Acts 2:3 nasb)*

*“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.” (Acts 2:3 niv)*

In each of the above scriptures, the glow that appeared on the heads of those assembled is described “as of fire”, “like fire” or “seemed to be” fire. It is not said that it was actually fire. Fire, or the appearance of fire, is indicative of the presence of God throughout the Bible. It is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Forked, fire-like flashes appeared upon the heads of those present representing the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Up to this point all the action had taken place in the gathering of the Christians who were assembled, awaiting the fulfillment of the promise by Jesus that *“you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”* (Acts 1:5) However, when the Holy Spirit came, the disciples spilled out into the street! The scene shifted from the house to the street.

### **THE DRAMA DOWN ON THE STREET**

*“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?” (Acts 2:4-8)*

It is imperative that we pay close attention to what is written in these verses. The following questions will help us discern what transpired:

#### **\* Who heard what was spoken?**

A list of foreigners who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Festival follows: *“And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” (Acts 2:8-11)*

There are at least 15 named groups, all of whom spoke a different dialect. Verse 6 says, *“every man heard them speak in his own language.”* The Greek word translated “language” is “*dialektos*” from which we get our English word “dialect.” Notice that the word “tongues” and “language” are used interchangeably in verses eight and eleven.

#### **\* Who spoke?**

Verse 7 tells us that they were Galileans. *“Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?”* The people who heard the Christians speaking that day were amazed that Galileans could speak other languages, the various heart languages of those who were visiting from other areas.

*\*How could they do that?* Verse four tells us that they “*began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*” The Greek word for “utterance” used in verse four means “the ability to enunciate plainly.” The Holy Spirit temporarily gave these early believers the ability to speak a language that they had never learned and that they did not know! This is the miracle of Pentecost that has been so abused.

*\* What are the reasons for this phenomenal development?*

They were given this ability for several reasons:

*One*, to credentialize these believers before the unbelieving public;

*Two*, in order to testify to all the visitors in the city of the Good News as it is in Jesus Christ;

*Three*, to demonstrate the power of Christianity in the days after the resurrection of Jesus;

*Four*, as a tool for evangelism. All these visitors were going to scatter to the four winds after the Pentecost Festival and could carry this brand new message to their own area.

These are some of the designs of divine genius behind this Pentecostal phenomenon of speaking a language that they had never learned. Today, cross-cultural missionaries must learn the languages of those to whom they are going, just one evidence that the miraculous ability to speak an unknown language was temporary.

It must be said that they did not speak gibberish; they did not speak an “angelic language” as I have heard some assert. The unbelieving sinners, the crowd to which the Christians witnessed that day said, “*how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?*” (Acts 2:8)

The ability to speak in an unlearned language was the first gift to appear and the first to disappear. It was not universal and it was not permanent. Its purpose was temporary. It was a sign to unbelievers. It was not given for the enjoyment of believers nor to prove that a believer was saved or possessed the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 14:21-22 states: “*In the law it is written: “With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,” says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers...”*

Pentecost can never be repeated. It would be just as impossible to have another Pentecost as it would be to repeat the Incarnation of Christ. The Holy Spirit comes into the believer to stay: “*He will abide with you forever.*” (John 14:16)

The modern-day emphasis that we see in some quarters of Christianity, is a revelation of the misunderstanding and/or misapplication of scripture, a display of carnality revealing a selfish desire to enjoy some extra-biblical emotional experience and which neither edifies the seeker nor glorifies the Savior. The emphasis is more upon the experience than upon the effect.

## SUMMATION

What does the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost mean to me today? It means:

1. That Jesus Christ lives in me and that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.  
*“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Cor.6:19)*
2. That I have power to live a holy life and to serve the Lord.  
*“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*
3. That I cannot lose my salvation.  
*“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Eph. 4:30)*
4. That I have resident within me the Guide (John 16:13); the Teacher (John 14:26) and the Helper (John 16:7) promised by Jesus.
5. That I have the Holy Spirit assisting me in my prayer life.  
*“The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us ....” (Rom. 8:26)*

For all this and more, let us say:

*“Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise him, all creatures here below.  
Praise him above, you heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!”*

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