

## Pentecost—the Coming of the Holy Spirit

**Lesson Scope:** Acts 2

### Lesson Focus

For forty days after His resurrection, Jesus met frequently with His disciples; "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Among other things, He told them that "they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father." After they witnessed Jesus' ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem and waited ten days, praying for the fulfillment of the promise that "ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." During that time, they ordained Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot.

It has been said, "Christ did not come to make bad people good; He came to make dead people live. Of course bad people become good when the Spirit of Christ moves into their lives, but it is true that this happens only when we 'have passed from death unto life.'"

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was planned by God, prophesied by the Old Testament Scriptures, and promised by the Lord Jesus. This event marks the birth of the New Testament church.

**Lesson Aim:** To see the significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

**Theme Verse:** John 15:26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

### Lesson Text:

#### The Spirit Sent

Acts 2:1-6 <sup>1</sup> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. <sup>5</sup> And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of

every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

### **The Scriptures Fulfilled**

**Acts 2:14-18** <sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: <sup>15</sup> For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup> But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; <sup>17</sup> And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: <sup>18</sup> And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

**Acts 2:36** <sup>36</sup> Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

### **The Believers Established**

**Acts 2:37-47** <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? <sup>38</sup> Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. <sup>40</sup> And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. <sup>41</sup> Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup> And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. <sup>43</sup> And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all that believed were together, and had all things common; <sup>45</sup> And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. <sup>46</sup> And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, <sup>47</sup> Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

## **Questions for Study**

### **The Spirit Sent**

1. How did the sound of wind and the appearance of tongues like fire represent the coming of the Spirit?
2. How do we know that the tongues mentioned in Acts 2:4 were not just expressions of ecstasy?
3. How does the fact of Pentecost affect saints today?

### **The Scriptures Fulfilled**

4. How did Joel's prophecy confirm the validity of Pentecost?
5. Why does receiving Jesus as Saviour and Lord qualify us to receive the Holy Spirit?
6. What kind of testifying other than preaching might the Lord want you to do?

### **The Believers Established**

7. What is the connection between the Spirit's power to convict and His power to comfort?
8. How did Pentecost take people a great step farther than the baptism of John the Baptist?
9. How can we express more of the Spirit demonstrated in Acts 2:44-46?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

Pentecost was one of the seven divinely-established Old Testament feasts. It was one of the three great annual feasts that adult males were required to attend. The coming of the Spirit received instant publicity because Jews were visiting Jerusalem from far-flung locations (Acts 2:9-11).

The day of Pentecost was called the Feast of Weeks in Deuteronomy 16:9-11. Seven weeks had passed since the Feast of First Fruits, when the people celebrated the beginning of grain harvest by bringing one of their first sheaves for the priest to wave before the Lord. Pentecost means "fiftieth" because it fell on "the morrow after the seventh Sabbath" (see Leviticus 23:16 in context). It was a second thanksgiving day, this time for the bountiful harvest represented by the loaves. Each family brought two loaves, which the priest waved before the Lord.

It was no accident that our Lord rose from the dead at the Feast of First Fruits, and that thousands of people came to believe in Jesus on the day of Pentecost. The two wave loaves suggest that believing Jews and Gentiles could now blend together in fellowship as one body, the church.

The other tongues (Acts 2:4) were actual languages that the apostles had

not previously known.

"The third hour of the day" (Acts 2:15) would correspond to our nine o'clock in the morning, when everyone was wide awake and as Peter pointed out, perfectly sober.

Last days (Acts 2:17) refers to the Church Age rather than to the last few days of time. An untoward generation (Acts 2:40) is morally crooked or perverse.

The strict sense of "such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47) is "those who were being saved."

## **Principles and Applications**

### **The Spirit Sent**

1. The events of the day of Pentecost were part of God's plan (Acts 2:1). No disciples planned the day of Pentecost; they did not know what to plan for. Neither did they understand beforehand the significance of God's timing. Only after God poured out His Spirit could they begin to understand His great purpose. He had established the Day of Pentecost centuries earlier to foreshadow this great event.

2. The sound from heaven and the accompanying miracles gave evidence that the Holy Spirit was sent from the Father in heaven (Acts 2:2). God often speaks through the "still small voice." But on this occasion, He wanted to make clear that He was ushering in a new era governed by His Spirit. The sound of wind and the sight of fire both fit the Holy Spirit's nature well (John 3:8; Luke 3:16). Speaking in tongues was a way of reaching out to people who did not yet believe (1 Corinthians 14:22).

Sometimes we hear even today of dramatic means by which God confirms the Gospel as it spreads to people who have never heard it before. But God does not give to every believer the power to do miracles or to speak in tongues (John 10:41). The Bible does not say that the three thousand people who were converted at Pentecost also spoke in tongues. But they were given the resources to be the kind of godly example that speaks to people of every language.

3. The Holy Spirit came to indwell each believer (Acts 2:3-4). No longer does a fiery, cloudy pillar need to lead God's congregation from afar. Now God leads the flock by way of a shared fire within their hearts. "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

To use another figure of speech, we "have been all made to drink into one

Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). If we do not see satisfactory evidences of the living water, let us drink more deeply (John 4:14; 7:38).

4. The coming of the Holy Spirit made it possible for the Gospel to reach all nations (Acts 2:5-6). In Old Testament times, people like Rahab, Ruth, and Naaman the Syrian came to know God through their contact with people of Israel. Nevertheless, in those days, many people had only a partial concept of God, and He tolerated their ignorance. Since Pentecost, God draws a much higher line of accountability: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). And He has charged us with a much more urgent commission: "All power is given unto me.... Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:18, 19).

### **The Scriptures Fulfilled**

5. God fulfilled prophetic Scripture by pouring out His Holy Spirit upon His people (Acts 2:14-18). From the beginning, God intended to give much more of Himself to His people, at least to those who were capable of receiving Him. Joel 2:28-32 was not a mere prediction; it was a prophecy. Pentecost was not an accident; it was a deliberate act. Knowing that God had carried His purpose forward to Pentecost, His people could be confident that He would carry it forward from there.

Notice that it was God's good pleasure to pour out His Spirit on a wide range of people, including those seen as very common—the young, the old, sons, daughters, servants, and handmaids.

6. The Holy Spirit will indwell all those who receive Jesus as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:17, 36, 39). What qualifies us for receiving the Spirit? We must acknowledge Him as the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What Christ did and taught when He lived on earth, He does and teaches as He moves among His people through the Spirit. It matters not what languages we speak, what culture we grew up in, or what talents we do or do not have. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off."

7. The Holy Spirit provides power for preaching (Acts 2:36). Peter had never had this kind of power before. He had been outgoing, certainly, but not Spirit controlled. He had been brash, but not brave. The other apostles too were speaking with a new courage. The Spirit within them was none other than the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who had already risen above the worst that Satan could throw at anyone. So what could stop them?

## **The Believers Established**

8. The Holy Spirit convicts men of their need of salvation, and He guides them into all truth (Acts 2:37-38). As the apostles preached, the Spirit was speaking directly to people's hearts, convicting them. Jesus had said, "When [the Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin" (John 16:8). That same Spirit has spoken to our hearts as we have listened to God's Word being preached, taught, or shared. We may be confident that He will also go with us as we share the Gospel.

9. The New Covenant introduced a change in God's requirements for man's acceptance with Him (Acts 2:38). People had repented before; some had even been baptized before, but now they were told to do these things "in the name of Jesus Christ." John the Baptist had prepared people's thinking for this, saying, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

10. The Holy Spirit's presence unifies the believers (Acts 2:44-46).

We do not practice the community of goods; we do not worship daily in the temple; we do not break bread from house to house as the apostles did; yet we should have that same unified spirit. And in many ways we do evidence that spirit by meeting people's needs on various levels. Sometimes it is surprising how warm and generous our brethren are, even toward members who seem to be social misfits, bad managers, and poor housekeepers. Other times, inspiration runs low, and we need to review these verses.

## **Important Teachings**

1. The events of the day of Pentecost were part of God's plan (Acts 2:1).
2. The sound from heaven and the accompanying miracles gave evidence that the Holy Spirit was sent from the Father in heaven (Acts 2:2).
3. The Holy Spirit came to indwell each believer (2:3-4).
4. The coming of the Holy Spirit made it possible for the Gospel to reach all nations (Acts 2:5-6).
5. God fulfilled prophetic Scripture by pouring out His Holy Spirit upon His people (Acts 2:14-18).
6. The Holy Spirit will indwell all those who receive Jesus as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:17, 36, 39).
7. The Holy Spirit provides power for preaching (Acts 2:36).
8. The Holy Spirit convicts men of their need of salvation, and He guides

them into all truth (Acts 2:37-38).

9. The New Covenant introduced a change in God's requirements for man's acceptance with Him (Acts 2:38).

10. The Holy Spirit's presence unifies the believers (Acts 2:44-46).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. How did the sound of wind and the appearance of tongues like fire represent the coming of the Spirit?

Wind is an invisible but powerful force. Humans cannot control it. Fire is also powerful, and it spreads quickly.

2. How do we know that the tongues mentioned in Acts 2:4 were not just expressions of ecstasy?

These tongues communicated to people in actual languages.

3. How does the fact of Pentecost affect saints today?

Each of us enjoys the presence of the Holy Spirit, who comforts and guides us.

4. How did Joel's prophecy confirm the validity of Pentecost? Joel's prophecy revealed that God had planned Pentecost long before the event.

5. Why does receiving Jesus as Saviour and Lord qualify us to receive the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is one with Jesus Christ, teaching the same things He did.

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6. What kind of testifying other than preaching might the Lord want you to do?

Answers will vary. Some believers knock on doors; some participate in street meetings; some answer questions; some befriend a person with spiritual needs. Being good friends with individuals and families who have newly come into the church may be especially effective, since some of those people are among our most enthusiastic missionaries.

7. What is the connection between the Spirit's power to convict and His power to comfort?

He convicts in order that He may comfort. He prompts us to get rid of sin so that we can enjoy the wonder of His presence.

8. How did Pentecost take people a great step farther than the baptism of John the Baptist?

John could merely point forward to Jesus. Pentecost was authorized by Jesus Christ Himself—the newly risen, ascended Lord—who baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

9. How can we express more of the Spirit demonstrated in Acts 2:44-46? Answers will vary. The warm brotherhood of the Spirit may express itself in giving direct financial relief. But many other times, it will show itself in doing projects together, visiting each other's homes, traveling together, sharing values, and giving and taking helpful suggestions.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

People may fear that the Holy Spirit will influence them to do fanatical things. Actually, the Spirit draws people away from fanaticism toward stability, sensibility, and peace. He is the Spirit of Christ, who is the only sinless person who ever lived. He pricks us when we do wrong and comforts us when we conform to Him. As He draws us toward Himself, He draws us toward each other.

### **Research Guide**

1. Look up Shavuot in an encyclopedia and note the significance the Jews attach to it. Interestingly, when Moses brought the Ten Commandments down from Mt. Sinai, three thousand people died (Exodus 32). On the day of Pentecost, three thousand souls were saved (Acts 2).
2. In case one gets the impression from Acts 2:38 that baptism itself washes away sins, compare Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:7; and 1 Peter 3:21.