

The Book of Acts

Lesson 3: Pentecost: The Spirit Comes -- Acts 2:1-13

It is early morning in Jerusalem, fifty days after the Passover when Jesus died and rose. The city is crowded. Pilgrims have come from every corner of the known world for the Feast of Pentecost, their many languages mixing in the streets like a hundred rivers meeting in one square. And in an upper room, a small band of disciples is doing what they have done for days. They are waiting. They are praying. They are trusting a promise.

Then heaven opens. Luke reaches for the only words that come close: a sound like a mighty rushing wind fills the whole house, and what looks like tongues of fire rests on each of them. The wind and the fire are old, familiar signs of the living God, the same God who met Israel at Sinai in fire and smoke. But this time He does not come to a mountain. He comes to people. The temple of God is no longer made of stone.

And then they speak. Filled with the Holy Spirit, these Galileans begin declaring the mighty works of God in languages they never learned, and the international crowd is stunned. Parthians and Medes, Egyptians and Romans, visitors from a dozen lands all hear the gospel in their own native tongue. At Babel, God once scattered humanity by confusing their language. Here, at Pentecost, He begins to gather the nations back by a message every one of them can understand.

This is the day the waiting ends and the church is born. The promise Jesus made on the hillside, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, is being kept before their eyes. The kingdom is breaking in, the Spirit is poured out, and the gospel is about to go to the ends of the earth. Some in the crowd are amazed and some are mocking, but no one can deny that something has happened. God has come down, and history will never be the same.

Group Discussion: On the day of Pentecost, the promise Jesus made finally came true, and the long waiting gave way to the coming of the Spirit (vv. 1-4). When have you seen God keep a promise in His own timing rather than yours, and what did that teach you about trusting Him?

Personal Reflection: The disciples received the Spirit only after a season of patient, prayerful waiting. Is there a promise of God you are still waiting on right now? How are you tempted to respond in the meantime, and how would trust look different?

Read Acts 2:1-13

Study Questions

1. Luke says, when the day of Pentecost arrived, the believers were all together, and suddenly the Spirit came (vv. 1-4). How does this moment fulfill what Jesus had promised, and why is the coming of the Holy Spirit such a pivotal event in God's plan?
2. The believers received the Spirit only after a long season of waiting and prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:1). Where in your life right now are you being asked to wait on God, and what would it look like to wait with trust rather than frustration or control?
3. The crowd was bewildered because each one heard the believers telling the mighty works of God in his own native language (vv. 6-11). What exactly were the tongues spoken at Pentecost, and what was their purpose?
4. At Pentecost, God saw to it that each person heard the gospel in his own native language (v. 8). When you share Christ, how well do you meet people where they are, in words and ways they can actually understand? Where might you need to listen better or speak more clearly?
5. Luke lists the many nations represented in the crowd, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and more, all hearing the gospel at once (vv. 9-11). What does this international moment reveal about the scope of God's plan, and how does Pentecost begin to reverse the scattering of Babel?
6. The gospel at Pentecost crossed every barrier of nation, language, and background (vv. 9-11). Are there people or groups you quietly assume are beyond your witness, or simply outside your circle of concern? What barrier is God asking you to cross?
7. The miraculous outpouring at Pentecost was a public, undeniable sign that confirmed the apostles as God's messengers (vv. 4-12). According to the New Testament, what was the purpose of such miraculous signs, and how should that shape the way we understand them?
8. Some in the crowd were amazed, while others dismissed the whole thing with mockery (vv. 12-13). When it comes to your walk with God, are you more drawn to seek dramatic experiences and feelings, or to rest in His settled Word? What does healthy spiritual hunger look like?
9. The tongues at Pentecost were real languages given to confirm the apostles' inspired message in the foundational age of the church (vv. 4-11; Hebrews 2:3-4). In light of the whole New Testament, how should we understand claims of present-day tongues, new revelation, and miraculous sign gifts, and where does our authority finally rest?
10. Look back over the coming of the Spirit, the keeping of the promise, the confirming sign, and the gospel going out to all nations. Name one specific way the events of Pentecost are calling you to live differently, and what is one step you will take this week in response.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Genesis 11:1-9, the scattering at Babel that Pentecost begins to reverse; Joel 2:28-32, the promised outpouring of the Spirit that Peter will cite; Hebrews 2:3-4, God confirming the message by signs and wonders in the apostolic age; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10,

the passing of partial gifts when the complete has come; 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the God-breathed Scripture that equips us for every good work