

The Holy Spirit, Teacher's Guide

Week 6: Pentecost and Holy Spirit Baptism

Acts 2:1–21, 32–33; Acts 11:15–18

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson asks and answers a question on which entire religious movements have been built: what is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, who received it, and is it promised to Christians today? The class must see the biblical data clearly. Holy Spirit baptism was always a promise, never a command (Acts 1:4–5); a person can obey a command, but only God can keep a promise, and nowhere in Scripture is anyone told to seek, tarry for, or obey Holy Spirit baptism. Scripture records it at two points: Pentecost, where the apostles were immersed in the Spirit's power to inaugurate the kingdom and equip them as Christ's witnesses (Acts 1:8; 2:1–4), and the household of Cornelius, roughly a decade later, where God poured out the same gift to settle a question no human testimony could have settled, that Gentiles were to be received into Christ without becoming Jews (Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–18; 15:7–9). Peter's own language is decisive: he had to reach back to "the beginning" to find a parallel, which means the thousands of conversions between Acts 2 and Acts 10 included no such experience. Each outpouring carried a unique, confirmatory purpose; neither was the ordinary equipment of the ordinary Christian.

The teacher should also keep the lesson's positive center burning: Pentecost is, before all else, the coronation evidence of the exalted Christ. Peter's sermon does not climax with the wind or the tongues but with the throne: "being therefore exalted at the right hand of God... he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing... God has made him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:33, 36). The kingdom prophesied by Daniel and announced by Jesus as "at hand" arrived with power on this day (Daniel 2:44; Mark 9:1; Colossians 1:13); the church began; the gospel terms were announced; and about three thousand were baptized. Pentecost is the birthday of the church and the public proof that Jesus reigns now, a standing answer both to those who postpone His kingdom to a future millennium and to those who treat Him as absent.

Hold clarity and kindness together. Many students have friends and family in pentecostal fellowships who sincerely believe they have received Spirit baptism, and this lesson gives the class the tools to discuss it: the two cases, their purposes, Peter's "at the beginning," and the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5, which by elimination is the water baptism commanded in the Great Commission and commanded even where the Spirit had just fallen (Acts 10:47–48). Carefully distinguish what this lesson denies (Spirit baptism as the common Christian experience) from what later weeks will affirm (the indwelling gift of the Spirit promised to every baptized believer, Acts 2:38–39, Week 9). Students should leave able to make that distinction cleanly, because confusing the two is the root of most error on this subject.

Question 1

Student Question:

Jesus told the apostles they would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:4–5), calling it “the promise of the Father.” Looking at Acts 1:1–8 carefully, to whom was this promise spoken, what were they told it would empower them to do, and why does it matter that Scripture calls Holy Spirit baptism a promise rather than a command?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Walk the class slowly through Acts 1:1–8, because the antecedents of every pronoun decide the doctrine. Luke says Jesus gave commands “to the apostles whom he had chosen” (1:2), presented Himself alive “to them” (1:3), ordered “them” not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for “the promise of the Father” (1:4), and told “them,” “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (1:5). The “you” of verse 5 is the apostles. Verse 8 specifies what the baptism would give and why: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Power for witness, for the men who had been with Him and could testify of His resurrection (1:21–22). When the promise lands in Acts 2:1–4, the nearest antecedent and the context (the apostles named in 1:26 and standing in 2:14; the speakers identified as Galileans, 2:7) identify the recipients as the twelve.

Develop the question’s sharpest point: promise versus command. A command calls for obedience and can be required of all (“repent and be baptized,” Acts 2:38, is commanded); a promise depends wholly on the giver, comes when and to whom he chooses, and cannot be obeyed, earned, or worked up. Scripture never commands anyone to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, never instructs a seeker how to obtain it, and never rebukes anyone for lacking it. That grammatical observation quietly dismantles entire systems of tarrying meetings and sought experiences: people are urged today to pursue what no apostle ever told anyone to pursue.

Trace the promise’s pedigree so the class sees its weight. John the Baptist foretold it: “he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11), identifying the Coming One as the baptizer; the Father’s promise stands behind it (Luke 24:49, “the promise of my Father... stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high”); Jesus connects it to the upper room promises the class studied last week (Acts 1:4, “which, he said, ‘you heard from me’”). Holy Spirit baptism is therefore the delivery mechanism of the John 14–16 promises: the guidance into all truth arrived by this outpouring. That link explains its recipients: the men promised total recall and all truth are the men baptized in the Spirit to receive it.

Note finally who administers this baptism: Christ Himself, from heaven (Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:33). No human hands, no water, no formula; it is heaven’s act from start to finish. That alone separates it from the baptism commanded in the Great Commission, which men administer in water (Acts 8:36–38; 10:47–48), a distinction Question 9 will complete.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The antecedents of Acts 1: the promise spoken to the apostles, fulfilled on the apostles
- Promise versus command: never sought, never commanded, never rebuked for lacking
- Power for witness (Acts 1:8): the stated purpose tied to apostolic testimony
- The pedigree: Matthew 3:11; Luke 24:49; the upper room promises delivered
- Christ as the only administrator of Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:33)
- Why grammar and context, not experience, must settle who received what

Discussion Prompts

- What difference does it make that no one in Scripture is ever commanded to be baptized in the Holy Spirit?
- How does Acts 1:8 connect Spirit baptism to the specific task of the apostles?
- Why is it important to identify the “you” in Acts 1:5 before building any doctrine on Acts 2?

Question 2

Student Question:

The apostles had to wait in Jerusalem for the promise, not knowing the day or the hour, and they devoted themselves to prayer while they waited (Acts 1:14). Waiting on God without a schedule is one of faith’s hardest assignments. What are you waiting on God for right now, and what would it look like to wait the way they did, together, prayerfully, and obediently?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Reconstruct the apostles’ waiting room. They had a promise (“not many days from now”) without a date, a city they were ordered not to leave, and the memory of a Master who had just ascended out of sight. Luke tells us how they filled the gap: “All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers” (Acts 1:14). Three marks: together (about a hundred and twenty, 1:15), prayerfully (devoted, not occasional), and obediently (they stayed in Jerusalem, did what lay at hand, even attending to the replacement of Judas from Scripture, 1:15–26). They did not manufacture the promise or chase substitutes; they prepared to receive what only God could give.

Let the class feel how countercultural that posture is. Waiting is our age’s least practiced discipline; we refresh, scroll, and expedite. And religious waiting is harder still, because heaven keeps its own calendar: Abraham waited twenty-five years for Isaac; Israel four hundred for the exodus and seventy for the return; Simeon waited a lifetime “for the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25). The Bible’s verdict on all that waiting is not wasted time but formed people: “they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31); “the Lord is good to those who wait for him” (Lamentations 3:25–26); “be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:7).

Distinguish biblical waiting from passivity, using the apostles as the model. Their waiting had content: assembly, prayer, Scripture, obedience to the last instruction received. That is the

template for every student currently in God's waiting room, for an answered prayer, a prodigal's return, healing, a spouse, relief from a trial: keep the company of the saints (waiting alone curdles into despair), keep praying with persistence (Luke 18:1-8), keep obeying the commands already in hand, and keep your post. God's delays are not God's absence; between the ascension and Pentecost, heaven was not idle but preparing a coronation.

Invite students to name (aloud or inwardly) one thing they are waiting on God for, and then to choose the apostolic pattern over the two usual failures: forcing the door (Saul sacrificing rather than waiting for Samuel, 1 Samuel 13:8-14) or abandoning the post (the servant who concluded "my master is delayed," Matthew 24:48-51). The promise-keeping God of Acts 2 is the same God your students are waiting on; Pentecost is permanent evidence that His "not many days" is worth every day of the wait.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The apostolic waiting pattern: together, devoted to prayer, obedient to the last instruction
- Waiting as formation: Abraham, Simeon, Israel, and the God who keeps His own calendar
- Waiting versus passivity: full hands while the heart waits
- The two failures: forcing the door (1 Samuel 13) and abandoning the post (Matthew 24:48-51)
- Persistence in prayer while waiting (Luke 18:1-8)
- Pentecost as standing proof that God's promises are worth the wait

Discussion Prompts

- What are you waiting on God for right now, and which part of the apostles' pattern is hardest for you?
- Why does waiting with other believers change the character of the wait?
- When has a delay of God's later proven to be a kindness you could not see at the time?

Question 3

Student Question:

When the Spirit came, the apostles spoke "in other tongues" and the crowd marveled: "we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:4-11). What exactly were the tongues of Pentecost, according to the text itself, and what purpose did they serve in getting the gospel's first sermon heard and believed?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Let the text define the tongues, because Luke goes out of his way to do so. The apostles "began to speak in other tongues (glossais) as the Spirit gave them utterance" (2:4), and the crowd's reaction supplies the definition: "each one was hearing them speak in his own language (dialekto)" (2:6); "how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?" (2:8); and then

Luke prints the atlas, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Egypt, Rome, Cretans, Arabians, “we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God” (2:9–11). The tongues of Pentecost were real, known human languages, never learned by the speakers, instantly intelligible to native hearers. Nothing in the account resembles ecstatic or unintelligible speech; the miracle’s whole force was intelligibility. Hold this definition firmly; it governs the word everywhere else (the “tongues” Cornelius’s household spoke are expressly “just as” Pentecost’s, Acts 10:46; 11:15), and Week 8 will apply it to 1 Corinthians.

Identify the purposes the question asks for. First, the tongues were a sign that arrested attention and authenticated the speakers: Galilean accents (2:7) delivering Elamite and Latin proved that God was acting; the crowd’s amazement (“what does this mean?” 2:12) assembled Peter’s audience for him. Second, they carried content: “the mighty works of God” (2:11), praise and proclamation, not gibberish needing decoding. Third, they were a fitting emblem of the gospel’s destination: at Babel languages scattered the race (Genesis 11); at Pentecost the Spirit crossed every language line in a single morning, announcing a message meant for “every nation under heaven” (2:5). The sign matched the mission.

Clarify the mechanics to prevent a common misreading: the miracle was in the speaking, not the hearing. The text says the apostles spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance (2:4); the crowd heard their own languages because those languages were actually being spoken. Some mockers, likely those outside the language groups being spoken at the moment, sneered “they are filled with new wine” (2:13), which Peter answers with Scripture and evidence, not with a demand for faith in the unverifiable. That is the consistent biblical pattern: real miracles were publicly checkable (Acts 4:16), which is why they confirmed the word (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3–4, next week’s text).

Note the supporting signs with precision: a sound “like” a mighty rushing wind, tongues “as of” fire, Luke’s careful similes. Wind (the same word family as Spirit, recall John 3:8) and fire mark divine presence and the prophesied baptism (Matthew 3:11). These accompaniments announced heaven’s act; the languages delivered heaven’s message. The lesson for the class’s later discernment: when God authenticated His word, the evidence was objective, public, and tied to intelligible proclamation, a standard worth remembering whenever modern phenomena claim Pentecost’s name.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Tongues defined by the text: real human languages, never learned, natively understood
- The miracle in the speaking, not the hearing (Acts 2:4)
- Three purposes: authenticating sign, intelligible content, emblem of a worldwide gospel
- Babel reversed: language division crossed by the Spirit (Genesis 11; Acts 2:5–11)
- Public verifiability as the mark of true signs (Acts 2:7; 4:16)
- This definition as the fixed reference point for every later “tongues” passage

Discussion Prompts

- How does Luke's own narration define what the tongues were, before any interpreter arrives?
- Why was intelligibility essential to what God was doing on this particular morning?
- What does the Babel connection suggest about God's intentions for the nations on the day the church began?

Question 4

Student Question:

The crowd heard "the mighty works of God" declared in their own native languages, God speaking their dialect, meeting them where they stood. When the gospel reached you, it came through someone who made it understandable to you. Who did that for you, and who in your life is waiting for you to make the good news plain to them?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Dwell on the tenderness inside the spectacle. The God who could have thundered in Hebrew alone chose to greet pilgrims in the dialects of their childhood, the language their mothers sang in, the words of home. "We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (2:11) is one of Scripture's great pictures of divine accommodation: God stooping to be understood. He has always done this, speaking through human prophets in human words, giving the Son as the Word made flesh (John 1:14), and inspiring Scripture in the marketplace Greek of ordinary people rather than a sacred code. Pentecost's languages are the gospel's character in miniature: truth that travels to where people actually live.

Now turn the principle homeward, as the question does: when the gospel reached you, it wore someone's voice. A parent who taught Bible stories at bedtime, a friend who invited, a preacher who made the cross plain, a coworker who answered questions without scorn, somebody translated the mighty works of God into your dialect, taking the trouble to be understandable to you in particular. Have students name that person (aloud where appropriate); gratitude is the right first response, and a note or call of thanks this week would not be wasted application. Paul's logic in Romans 10:14 stands behind every such name: "how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?"

Then press the second half: who is waiting on you? Making the good news plain rarely requires a new language; it requires the translations love performs. Speaking without church jargon to the unchurched neighbor. Answering a teenager's questions at the level of the question. Explaining why you have hope "with gentleness and respect" to the skeptical coworker (1 Peter 3:15). Choosing the kitchen-table Bible study over the lecture. Even literal accommodations, the large-print Bible for failing eyes, patience with the visitor who cannot find Habakkuk, the ride offered so someone can be present at all. Philip's question to the Ethiopian is the model posture: "Do you understand what you are reading?" followed by beginning "with this Scripture" where the man actually was (Acts 8:30-35).

Guard one boundary while hearts are warm: accommodation bends the delivery, never the content. Paul became “all things to all people” to save some (1 Corinthians 9:19–23), yet refused to tamper with God’s word (2 Corinthians 4:2); the same crowd that heard their own dialects also heard “repent and be baptized” without a syllable softened (Acts 2:38). Meeting people where they stand is the method; leaving them where they stand is the failure. The Pentecost pattern is both: God speaks your language, and God calls you to His kingdom.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Divine accommodation: God stooping to be understood, from prophets to Pentecost
- Gratitude for the translators in our own story (Romans 10:14)
- Making the gospel plain: jargon-free speech, gentle answers, meeting questions at their level (1 Peter 3:15)
- Philip’s posture: starting where the hearer actually is (Acts 8:30–35)
- Accommodation of delivery without alteration of content (1 Corinthians 9:19–23; 2 Corinthians 4:2)
- One named person each student will carry the message to this week

Discussion Prompts

- Who made the gospel plain to you, and have you ever thanked them?
- What habits of church speech might be foreign languages to the people we hope to reach?
- Who is the one person within your reach this month, and what would “their dialect” require of you?

Question 5

Student Question:

Peter explains Pentecost by quoting Joel 2:28–32, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,” and by pointing to the exalted Christ who “has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing” (Acts 2:16–17, 33). What did Joel’s prophecy promise, how did Pentecost begin to fulfill it, and what does the outpoured Spirit prove about where Jesus is and what He is doing right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Set Joel’s prophecy in its own frame first. Joel 2:28–32 promised that “afterward,” in days the New Testament calls “the last days,” God would pour out His Spirit “on all flesh”: sons and daughters prophesying, young men seeing visions, old men dreaming dreams, even male and female servants included, with cosmic language of upheaval and, at the center, the great open door: “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (2:32). The promise’s stunning feature is its breadth: not Israel’s prophets and kings only, but all flesh, every category the old order kept at the margins, young, old, male, female, slave, free, and, as Acts will unfold,

eventually Jew and Gentile alike. Moses' old longing (Numbers 11:29, recall Week 3) had become an appointment on God's calendar.

Now watch Peter's introduction: "this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel" (2:16). Not "this resembles" or "this previews": this is that. The last days had begun; the era of fulfillment was open for business (compare Hebrews 1:2; 1 Corinthians 10:11). Pentecost began the fulfillment, the Spirit poured on the apostles, prophecy sounding in the streets, and the "all flesh" breadth kept unfolding through Acts: the Samaritans, the Ethiopian, Cornelius's Gentile household (the second outpouring), and the gift of the Spirit promised to every penitent baptized believer, "for the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off" (2:38–39), Peter's direct echo of Joel's "all flesh" and "everyone who calls." Teach the class to read Joel's apocalyptic imagery (blood, fire, smoky darkness) as the prophets' stock language for epochal judgment and change, here marking the end of the Jewish age's exclusiveness and the dawn of the age of salvation; Peter's point is not astronomy but eschatology: the turning of the ages had arrived.

Then climb Peter's staircase in Acts 2:32–33, the question's second half. God raised Jesus; we are witnesses; "being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." The logic runs upward and then cascades down: resurrection, ascension, enthronement, reception of the promise, outpouring. The audible wind and the foreign languages were therefore courtroom evidence of an invisible coronation: you can see what only an enthroned Messiah could send. Pentecost is to the exaltation what the empty tomb is to the resurrection, the public, checkable effect of a heavenly fact.

Land the doctrine where Peter lands it: "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (2:36). Jesus is reigning now, at God's right hand, on David's promised throne (2:30), pouring out gifts, adding the saved to His kingdom (2:41, 47; Colossians 1:13). This is the New Testament's standing answer to premillennial postponements of the kingdom: the King is not waiting to reign; He must reign until the last enemy is destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:25–26). What He is doing right now is exactly what Pentecost displayed: ruling, giving, saving, and building His church.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Joel's promise: the Spirit on all flesh, every margin included, salvation for all who call
- "This is that": the last days begun at Pentecost (Acts 2:16; Hebrews 1:2)
- Prophetic imagery read as the prophets used it: epochal change, not astronomy
- Peter's staircase: resurrection, exaltation, reception, outpouring (Acts 2:32–33)
- Pentecost as public evidence of the enthronement: Lord and Christ now (Acts 2:36)
- The reigning Christ against postponed-kingdom doctrine (Acts 2:30–36; 1 Corinthians 15:25)

Discussion Prompts

- What categories of people does Joel's "all flesh" deliberately include, and why is that good news in this room?
- How does the outpoured Spirit function as evidence for where Jesus is right now?
- Why does it matter whether the kingdom began at Pentecost or awaits a future age?

Question 6

Student Question:

Pentecost proves that Jesus is not waiting to become King someday; He was made "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36) and reigns now. If Jesus is reigning today, then His commands are current orders, not historical documents. In what specific corner of your life have you been living as though the King were absent?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The hinge from doctrine to life is Peter's title pair: "Lord and Christ" (2:36). Lord means owner and sovereign; Christ means God's anointed King (Week 4). If Pentecost proves anything, it proves tense: Jesus reigns, present indicative. And the crowd models the only coherent response to a present King: "they were cut to the heart, and said... 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" (2:37), followed by repentance and baptism the same day (2:38, 41). Nobody asks "what shall we do?" about a historical figure; you ask it of a king whose authority currently covers you.

Expose the functional deism the question names. Many believers would never deny Christ's reign doctrinally while living as though the throne were vacant: His commands are admired as wisdom literature rather than obeyed as current orders; decisions about money, work, romance, and retirement are made and then perhaps blessed; Sunday acknowledges a King the calendar otherwise ignores. The Lord's own diagnosis: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46). A present King makes "later" and "partly" into words of rebellion; the Pentecost crowd understood, and three thousand changed their lives before sundown.

Help students locate their own "corner." The question deliberately asks for a specific area where the King's reign has not yet reached: the temper at home that Sunday composure conceals; the entertainment queue no elder will ever audit; the business practice filed under "everybody does it"; the grudge granted permanent asylum; the giving level set years ago and never revisited; the dating relationship steered by feelings rather than holiness. Kingdom citizenship is total by definition, "every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5), and corners withheld are not neutral ground but contested territory.

Offer the apostolic motivation, which is grace before demand. The reigning King is the crucified Savior; the throne room is approached "with confidence... that we may receive mercy" (Hebrews 4:16); His present reign is also present advocacy (Romans 8:34, ahead in Week 11). Surrendering the corner is not appeasing a tyrant but coming home to the One who was pierced

for it (2:36–37). Close with the crowd’s question turned personal: having heard that Jesus is Lord and Christ, what shall I do, this week, in the corner I just named?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “Lord and Christ” in the present tense: reign as current fact, commands as current orders
- Functional deism: confessing the throne while living as if it were vacant (Luke 6:46)
- The Pentecost crowd as the model response: conviction, question, same-day obedience (Acts 2:37–41)
- Naming the withheld corner: total citizenship, every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5)
- Grace on the throne: the reigning King is the crucified Advocate (Hebrews 4:16)
- Obedience as homecoming rather than appeasement

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between admiring Jesus’ teachings and obeying a reigning King?
- Why is “what shall we do?” the most honest question a person can ask after hearing Acts 2?
- What would the people closest to you say is the corner where your King’s reign is least visible?

Question 7

Student Question:

Compare Acts 10:44–48 with Acts 11:15–18. What happened at the household of Cornelius, why did Peter connect it to Pentecost (“just as on us at the beginning”), and what unique question did this outpouring settle for the early church (see also Acts 15:7–9)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Tell the Cornelius story with its build-up, because the drama is the doctrine. Cornelius: a centurion, devout, generous, prayerful, and a Gentile (10:1–2). An angel sends for Peter; meanwhile Peter, praying on a rooftop, receives the vision of the sheet three times, “what God has made clean, do not call common” (10:9–16), divine pre-treatment for a prejudice so deep it took heaven’s repetition. Peter goes, confesses the lesson (“God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean,” 10:28), and preaches Christ. Then the interruption: “while Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word,” and the circumcised believers were amazed “because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles, for they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God” (10:44–46). Before baptism was commanded, before hands were laid, before anyone voted, God signed.

Now let Peter interpret his own experience in Acts 11. Retelling it in Jerusalem to critics, he says, “the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (11:15–16). Weigh “at the beginning”: a decade of church history, thousands of conversions

(2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7), and Peter's only available parallel is Pentecost itself. Holy Spirit baptism had not been happening at every conversion; if it had, the comparison would have been meaningless and the Jerusalem brethren would have needed no convincing. The event was so rare that it functioned as a divine exclamation point, which is precisely how Peter argues: "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us... who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (11:17). The critics' response seals it: "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life" (11:18).

Name the unique question this outpouring settled: are Gentiles to be received into Christ as Gentiles, without circumcision and the Law? No human authority could have carried that verdict; Jewish believers "of the circumcision" would justly have demanded God's own testimony, and God gave it in the one currency they could not dispute, the same gift as "at the beginning." Years later, when the question resurfaced at the Jerusalem conference, this event was still the decisive exhibit: "God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them" (15:7-9). The Cornelius outpouring was God's once-for-all ruling on the Gentile question, not a new normal for conversions; even in Caesarea it fell on the household before and apart from their obedience in baptism, marking it as God's sovereign sign rather than part of the salvation pattern itself.

Underline the two-case symmetry for the class, because it organizes the whole doctrine: Pentecost opened the kingdom to the Jews with the apostles as witnesses; Caesarea opened it to the Gentiles with the same sign "at the beginning" as the credential. Two hinge points, two confirmations, one gospel for all flesh, exactly Joel's promised breadth completed. And note what followed each: preaching, and water baptism commanded (2:38; 10:47-48). The signs opened doors; the gospel terms walked through them unchanged.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The build-up: visions and an angel to overcome a prejudice doctrine could not
- "Just as on us at the beginning": Peter's parallel proving the rarity of Spirit baptism
- The unique verdict: Gentiles received as Gentiles, by God's own testimony (Acts 15:7-9)
- The outpouring as God's sign about the Gentiles, not a component of their salvation
- Two hinge points, one gospel: Jews at Pentecost, Gentiles at Caesarea
- Water baptism still commanded where the Spirit had just fallen (Acts 10:47-48)

Discussion Prompts

- Why was God's own visible testimony necessary before the church would receive Gentiles?
- What does Peter's need to reach back to "the beginning" tell us about the decade in between?
- How does Acts 15:7-9 show the lasting purpose of what happened at Cornelius's house?

Question 8

Student Question:

God went to extraordinary lengths, a vision to Peter, an angel to Cornelius, and the Spirit poured out, to convince His own people that those they considered outsiders were welcome in Christ. Who do you find hardest to imagine sitting beside you in the kingdom? What does Acts 10–11 demand that you do with that feeling?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Face the uncomfortable mirror first: the hero of Acts 10 needed three visions, a voice from heaven, and a direct order before he would walk through a Gentile's door, and even then he arrived saying, "you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation" (10:28). Peter was an apostle, baptized in the Spirit, a preacher of Pentecost's "all flesh" sermon, and a wall still stood in his heart that only God's repeated intervention could breach. And the lesson did not take permanently: years later Peter withdrew from Gentile tables at Antioch under peer pressure, and Paul opposed him to his face because "their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel" (Galatians 2:11–14). If prejudice could cling to Peter, no student in the room should claim immunity.

Let students do the honest translation. Few in your class struggle with first-century kosher walls; the modern equivalents wear other uniforms: race and nationality; political tribe; social class and education; the addict, the felon, the homeless; the person whose sins are publicly different from our private ones; even religious background, the assumption that certain families or types will never obey the gospel, so why carry it to them. The question's phrasing, "hardest to imagine sitting beside you in the kingdom," is deliberately concrete: kingdom seating is God's choice, not ours, and heaven's table is already set with "a great multitude... from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Revelation 7:9).

Then state what Acts 10–11 demands be done with the feeling: not managed, excused, or renamed, but repented of and overruled by truth. The theological artillery is heavy and explicit: "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (10:34–35); "he made no distinction between us and them" (15:9); "there is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28); and James flatly forbids partiality in the assembly, down to where people sit (James 2:1–9). The gospel's verdict on every wall is that Christ "has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14); rebuilding any wall is working against the cross.

Move from feeling to deed, since repentance in Scripture always has hands. Peter's repentance looked like walking through the door, staying as a guest (10:48, accepting Gentile hospitality, the deeper taboo), and defending the newcomers before his critics. Assign the modern equivalents: speak to the person at services you always route around; extend the invitation across the line you have quietly drawn; defend the absent when the joke or the slur surfaces at work or in the family; carry the gospel to the household you had written off. The kingdom's door swung open at Caesarea without human permission; our task is to stop standing in the doorway.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Peter's wall: even an apostle needed heaven's repetition, and later relapsed (Galatians 2:11–14)
- Modern translations of the Jew–Gentile wall: race, class, tribe, history, written-off households
- God's impartiality as settled doctrine (Acts 10:34–35; 15:9; James 2:1–9)
- The cross and the demolished wall (Ephesians 2:14): rebuilding it opposes the gospel
- Repentance with hands: through the door, at the table, defending the newcomer
- Kingdom seating belongs to God (Revelation 7:9)

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think Peter needed the vision three times, and what does that suggest about how deep such walls run?
- Who is the person or group you have quietly assumed would never obey the gospel, and what does Acts 10 say about that assumption?
- What would table fellowship, real shared life, look like across the lines that divide our community?

Question 9

Student Question:

Many sincere believers today are taught to seek Holy Spirit baptism as a personal experience required of every Christian. From this week's passages, who actually received Holy Spirit baptism in Scripture, what did each outpouring accomplish, and why do Ephesians 4:5 ("one baptism") and the command of water baptism in Acts 10:47–48 show that the baptism which continues today is baptism in water into Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the week's summit question, and the class now holds every tool it needs. Begin with the census: who, in the entire New Testament record, received Holy Spirit baptism? Two cases: the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 1:5 promised it; 2:1–4 delivered it) and the household of Cornelius (10:44–46), which Peter expressly identifies with the first ("just as on us at the beginning," 11:15–17). Each served a stated, unrepeatable purpose: Pentecost empowered the apostles' witness and inaugurated the kingdom with God's audible, visible seal (1:8; 2:33); Caesarea bore God's testimony that Gentiles were granted repentance unto life (11:18; 15:7–9). No third case exists; no command to receive it exists; no instructions for seeking it exist; no rebuke for lacking it exists. Doctrines must be built from what Scripture says, and on this subject Scripture's record is short, specific, and closed.

Now bring in Ephesians 4:5, written around three decades after Pentecost: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." One, in a unity list alongside one God and one body, items that admit no plurality.

So which baptism is the one that remains? Apply the elimination the question sets up. At Caesarea itself, with the Spirit freshly fallen and tongues still echoing, Peter “commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” in water (10:47–48): Spirit baptism, even where it occurred, did not replace water baptism but pointed to it. The baptism of the Great Commission is administered by men, in water, to penitent believers, for the forgiveness of sins, until the end of the age (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16; Acts 2:38; 8:36–38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Holy Spirit baptism was administered by Christ alone, twice, for confirmation. The continuing, commanded, universal baptism, the “one baptism”, is water baptism into Christ. That conclusion is not anti-Spirit; it is simply Peter’s own practice in both Acts 2 and Acts 10.

Equip the class for the pastoral conversation, because the question specifies sincere believers who have been taught otherwise. Acknowledge what is true in their longing: they want God’s presence and power, which Scripture really does promise, through the indwelling gift given at baptism (Acts 2:38–39; 5:32, Week 9’s subject), the word, and prayer. Then reason together, gently: ask where Scripture commands anyone to seek Spirit baptism; walk through the two cases and their purposes; show Peter’s “at the beginning” and what it implies about the years between; open Ephesians 4:5 and ask which baptism can still be obeyed today. Many have never had the two-case evidence laid out; do it without scorekeeping. And distinguish carefully for your own students the thing this lesson denies from the thing it does not: denying that Spirit baptism is for every believer today is not denying that the Spirit is given to every believer today. Confusing Holy Spirit baptism with the gift of the Holy Spirit is the single most common error on this subject, and the next lesson exists to resolve it.

Close the doctrinal loop with the experience question, honestly and kindly. Modern experiences, however emotionally powerful, cannot self-authenticate; Pentecost’s credentials were objective (known languages, public verification, prophetic fulfillment), and the heart is not a reliable judge of its own ecstasies (Proverbs 28:26; recall Week 3 on “better felt than told”). The sure ground is what is written: the promise was made to specific people for specific purposes and was kept; the command that reaches us is “repent and be baptized... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (2:38). The student who has obeyed that command lacks nothing God currently promises, and may rest there.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The complete census: two cases of Holy Spirit baptism, each with a stated confirmatory purpose
- No command, no instructions, no rebuke: the grammar of promise versus command applied
- Ephesians 4:5: the “one baptism” that remains, identified by elimination
- Acts 10:47–48: water baptism commanded even where the Spirit had fallen
- Distinguishing Holy Spirit baptism from the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38–39), the hinge to Week 9
- Experience versus credentials: objective signs then, the written word now
- Pastoral method: reasoning gently with the sincerely mistaken (1 Peter 3:15)

Discussion Prompts

- If a friend asked, “Have you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?”, how would you answer from the two-case evidence?
- Why does Ephesians 4:5 force a choice about which baptism continues, and how do Acts 10:47–48 help us make it?
- What does the seeker of Spirit baptism actually long for, and what does God actually promise that answers the longing?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this week’s passages, the wind and fire of Pentecost and the astonishment in Cornelius’s house. The same exalted King who poured out the Spirit still adds the saved to His church today (Acts 2:38–41, 47). Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this truth, and one concrete way you will live under His present reign this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Gather the week into its single sight line: wind and fire over twelve heads in Jerusalem, astonishment in a centurion’s living room in Caesarea, and above both, the same exalted Lord pouring out what He promised. The class has watched the kingdom’s two doors open, Jew and Gentile, and has learned to file Holy Spirit baptism where Scripture files it: a kept promise with a finished purpose. Now the capstone asks what the King’s keeping of promises does to the people who study it.

Steer the formation toward the lesson’s living center: the present reign of Christ. The crowd’s response remains the template, conviction, the asked question, and same-day obedience (2:37–41), and the church’s ongoing life remains the evidence, “the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (2:47). For students not yet baptized into Christ, this week’s texts have laid the path plainly (2:38), and the teacher should leave that door visibly open. For the baptized, the question is the reign’s reach: the corner named in Question 6, the wall named in Question 8, the person named in Question 4. Concrete answers will sound like: “I am going to have the conversation with my neighbor I have postponed for a year”; “I am writing the thank-you to the man who taught me the gospel”; “I am crossing the room on Sunday to the family I have never met”; “I am bringing my entertainment choices under the King I claim.”

Give the class the assurance this lesson uniquely funds: the Christ who kept “not many days from now” to the day keeps everything else He has promised. Forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit to the baptized (2:38–39), His presence to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20), His return (Acts 1:11), the same Pentecost certainty underwrites them all. A King with this track record can be trusted with waiting rooms, withheld corners, and hard conversations alike.

Set the hook for next week before dismissing: Pentecost's power did not end with the apostles' tongues; the apostles laid hands on others, and miraculous gifts spread to confirm the word as it went. How those gifts worked, what they were for, and how Scripture says they were transmitted, the strange afternoon in Samaria when a sorcerer offered money for the power, is Week 7. The students now have the foundation: the Spirit's extraordinary works always served the word; next week they watch that principle govern the age of miracles.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The week's sight line: two outpourings, one exalted King, one gospel for all flesh
- The Pentecost template: conviction, the asked question, same-day obedience (Acts 2:37–41)
- The open door for the unbaptized and the reign's reach for the baptized
- Promise-keeping as the ground of assurance: He kept "not many days" to the day
- Bridge to Week 7: the gifts that confirmed the word, conveyed through apostles' hands

Discussion Prompts

- Which moment from Acts 2 or Acts 10–11 will you carry longest, and what does it ask of you?
- How does Pentecost change the way you hear every other promise of Christ?
- What same-day obedience is available to you before this week ends?