

## THE SPIRIT IS POURED OUT - Acts 2:1-13

The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the defining event in the book of Acts. It sets the stage and gives meaning and definition to everything that follows. A clear understanding of the meaning of Pentecost is essential for an accurate interpretation of Acts.

**2:1 When the day of Pentecost came.** Pentecost was one of three annual pilgrim feasts of the Jews in which every Jewish male in the area was required to attend. (The other two pilgrim feasts were Passover and Tabernacles) The word "Pentecost" (Gk. pentecostos) means fiftieth. Pentecost took place fifty days after Passover.

**they were all together in one place.**

- Upper room
- Temple courts

Wherever the disciples gathered, they were there in obedience to the command of Jesus to wait in Jerusalem to be "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49; cf. Acts 1:4-8).

**2:2-3 a violent wind ... tongues of fire.** The outpouring of the Spirit was accompanied by two supernatural wonders. These wonders indicate that a theophany (a visual manifestation of the presence of God) was occurring.

- One wonder - "in the heaven above," - wind
- the other "on the earth below" – fire

In the Old Testament fire is sometimes used as a symbol of God's presence.

According to Stanley Horton, "The fire here signified God's acceptance of the Church Body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:21, 22; 1 Cor. 3:16), and then, the acceptance of the individual believers as also being temples of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19)."

**2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit who had come upon the disciples now entered into them and filled them with His power and presence.

**began to speak in other tongues.** The 120 disciples' speaking in tongues at Pentecost was the immediate and direct effect of their being filled with/baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The disciples' speaking in the tongues of the surrounding Gentile nations (fifteen are mentioned) testifies to the purpose of the gift. It reminds us of Jesus' ultimate focus in Luke 24:47 and Acts 1:8 on "all nations" and "the ends of the earth." The purpose of Spirit baptism, as presented by Luke both in his gospel and in Acts, is empowerment for missional witness. ... power to be my witnesses.

**2:5 from every nation under heaven.** Luke informs his readers that people “from every nation under heaven” were gathered on the Day of Pentecost. Luke uses hyperbole to make a point.

According to John R. W. Stott, “Although all the nations of the world were not present literally, they were representatively.”

The list of nations in verses 9-11 harks back to the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10, and includes descendants of all three of Noah’s sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. We are reminded of Jesus’ words that “repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

**2:6 each ... in his own native language.** The missional purpose (to every tribe, ethnic group, tongue and nation) of Spirit baptism is again emphasized in this verse.

**2:11 declaring the wonders of God.** Having been filled with the Spirit, the 120 begin to declare the wonders of God to the gathering crowd in their own native tongues.

What About Us?

Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel. And yet, He was insistent that they not begin the task until they had first been “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

We, like those first-century disciples, have also been commanded to take the gospel to all nations. And we, as they, must obey the command of Jesus to wait for the Spirit’s empowering. This empowering comes as a result of one’s being baptized in the Holy Spirit. This powerful experience is as essential a requirement for ministry today as it was for the disciples then.

Pentecost, rather than being the birthday of the church, is the moment in time when the already existent church was first empowered by the Spirit to carry out its God-given mandate to take the gospel to all nations.

Believers today should ask for, and expect to receive, the same empowering experience as those first-century believers at Pentecost. And they should expect it for the same purpose, empowerment for mission.

Further, Pentecost is an early indication in Acts that Spirit baptism is an experience distinct from conversion. The disciples were already converted before Pentecost. They had been cleansed (John 15:3), called (Matt. 4:19; Luke 5:27-28; John 10:27-28), and commissioned (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16) by Jesus to take the gospel to the nations.