

## Bible Study Session 3: The Book of Acts



Read Acts 2:1-13 and answer the following questions

**1. What exactly is the day of Pentecost?**

- Pentecost is the day celebrated by Christians which signifies the coming of the Holy Spirit upon God's people as they gathered together in Jerusalem, and as they celebrated the Feast of Weeks. Pentecost is celebrated on the fiftieth day after Easter.

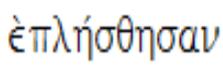
**2. Look at vv.2-3. There are 2 strong "images" used here to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit. What are they and how should we understand this?**

- The two "images" we find in vv.2-3 with the coming of the Holy Spirit are "sound like the blowing of a violent wind" which filled the house and "tongues of fire". When we think about the violent wind (some translations use the term mighty rushing wind), it is in line with the way

in which God made his presence known to Elijah in 1 Kings 19:11. The tongues of fire again signify the presence of God (Father, Son and Spirit) especially within the Old Testament. Within the Old Testament, the presence of God through fire and cloud (God in the temple in Exodus) is often referred to as the Glory of God and signifies God's holiness and purity. The tongues of fire could thus portray to us both the power and purity of speech as the disciples proclaimed the "wonders of God (2:11).

**3. Read Judges 3:10 and Acts 2:3-4. Each of these tell us something specific about the Holy Spirit. What do they tell us and how should we understand them?**

- What these texts show us is that the Holy Spirit was not present ONLY in the New Testament. Judges 3:10 is an account of the Holy Spirit that rests upon Othniel and enables him to do certain things. Acts 2:3-4 is the account of the Holy Spirit filling the disciples (apostles) at Pentecost. But there is one key difference between the two: In the Old Testament we the Spirit rested upon God's people suggesting to us that this was a temporary occurrence. In the New Testament however, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is a more permanent encounter as the Spirit now fills God's people and dwells within them. The purpose/function of the Spirit has not changed but the way in which we encounter the Spirit is slightly different.

-  and she was upon him
-  they were filled

**4. V.4 says that "they were filled with the Holy Spirit..." Who is the "they" that v.4 is referring to?**

- When we consider Acts 1, we find that in v.15, Peter stands up to address those present with the 11 and we are told that the group who

were there consisted of about 120 people. We can then assume that the “they” spoken about in v.4 is not simply the 11 and Matthias but possible included all 120 people who were present with them.

**5. When Acts 2:4 tells us that they spoke in “other tongues”, the word used is *glossa* (tongue/language). Today, it often refers to an unintelligible utterance during spiritual ecstasy. How do we understand this in light of the context of this passage?**

- This chapter in the Book of Acts is very clear about what the ‘tongues’ were at Pentecost. The tongues referred to in v.4 are the gifting of being able to speak an audible and understandable language that was not possible before the gifting of the Spirit. This is clearer for us in vv.6-7 where they crowd that gathered heard the apostles speaking in “his own language” and were amazed at this because the apostles were all Galileans.

**6. Why were so many people astonished at what was happening during Pentecost?**

**7. Look at vv. 9-11. In these verses we have a list of different nations who were present at Pentecost. What does this signify/suggest to us?**

- This is one really unique feature of this text. We know from 1:8 that the apostles will become Christ’s “witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This also gives us a simple outline of the Book of Acts. But now we find that the “wonders of God” are being proclaimed to different nations already in chapter 2 but the proclamation is happening in Jerusalem. This is the start of the gospel of Christ going out to all the world.

**8. There are 2 reactions seen in this passage to the events of Pentecost. What are they and how should we understand them?**

- The two reaction we see in this passage are amazement and wonder, and doubt. We know that throughout the life of Jesus (during His public

ministry), there were always those who heard and understood what He was saying and followed Him. Others heard His teachings and chose not to follow and so the reactions here of the crowd are yet another example of the struggles faced by those who bring the gospel.

