

THE DAY OF PENTECOST AND THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE CHURCH IS BORN ACTS 02:01–13

Introduction

The Day of Pentecost was one of the most phenomenal and important events in all of history. There are several reasons why the event was so important.

=> It was “the coming of the Holy Spirit.”

=> It was the birth of the church.

=> It was the corporate filling of the Holy Spirit, of the body of believers with the promised presence of Christ (Jn. 14:16-18).

=> It was the personal filling of the individual believer by the Holy Spirit.

=> It was the Presence and Power of God coming upon believers, gifting and equipping them to proclaim the glorious message of salvation to men.

I. There was God’s providence (v. 1).

II. There was man obeying (v. 1).

III. There was the spirit of being together, in one mind (v. 1).

IV. There was the Spirit’s infilling (vv. 2-4).

V. There was witnessing — God-fearing men heard the Word (vv. 5-11).

VI. There were different reactions (vv. 12-13).

ACTS 02:01–04 PENTECOST, THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The disciples had been deliberately prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Bible the revelation of the Spirit had been step by step, that is, progressive. Prophecy shows this clearly.

1. Joel prophesied, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people....” (Joel 2:28-29).
2. John the Baptist said, “I baptize with water, but He shall baptize with [en, in] the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16).
3. In the early part of Jesus’ ministry, He had said that believers were to be “born again...[by] the Spirit” (Jn. 3:3- 4; see 1 Jn. 5:1).

4. During His ministry, Jesus taught that men were to receive the Holy Spirit by prayer (Lk. 11:13).
5. In the Upper Room, Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as a Person (Jn. 14:15-26), and He outlined the work of the Spirit with both unbelievers and believers (Jn. 16:7-15). Significantly, He revealed that He was praying to the Father for the Comforter to come and abide with the disciples (Jn. 14:16-17).
6. After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to His disciples in the Upper Room. There He symbolically breathed on them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 20:22). But He insisted they not begin their ministry until they experienced the Spirit actually coming upon them with power (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8).
7. Right before Jesus was to ascend into heaven, He said, "John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5).
8. Then, ten days after Jesus' ascension and after much prayer, the Holy Spirit came upon and filled the whole body of believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

There are two events of the Holy Spirit's coming that seem to hold historical significance. These two particular events are very, very special to the church, for both Jewish and Gentile believers were clearly seen to be in God's historical plan. Both Jew and Gentile were baptized by the Holy Spirit, that is, placed into the body of Christ, His Church.

1. At Pentecost: the disciples were "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4).
 - a. This was in fulfilment of the prophecy by Joel. The Spirit was *poured out* upon the believers (Acts 2:16).
 - b. This was in fulfilment of the prophecies by Jesus and John. The Spirit *baptized*, that is, immersed the believers with His own presence (Acts 1:5; 10:44-48; see 11:15-16, esp. 16).
2. At Cornelius' house: the Holy Spirit "came on", had been "poured out", and was "received" by the Gentile believers (Acts 10:44-47).
 - a. Peter said to the Jews who came with him, "They have received the Holy Spirit *just as we have.*" (Acts 10:47).
 - b. Peter reported the event to the Jerusalem Church: "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 11:15-16)
 - c. Peter used the experience to support Paul before the great Jerusalem Council:

Acts 15:8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.

In all three instances the idea conveyed is that of an event just like *their own* experience. It is as though Peter pointed to a Gentile Pentecost or at least an extension of Pentecost in Acts 2 to include the Gentiles.

Note two other facts:

1. At Pentecost, the account uses the word *filled*, not *baptized*.
2. At Cornelius' house, the account says the Holy Spirit *came on*, had been *poured out*, and *received*. But in reporting the experience to the Jerusalem Church, Peter used the word *baptized*. He said the Gentile believers were "baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:16) "as he had come on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). This clearly says that although the word *baptized* is not used in the Pentecost experience, the disciples were baptized or immersed with the Spirit's presence at Pentecost. The words *filled*, *received*, *poured*, *baptized* and *came on* are all used interchangeably to describe the Spirit's presence coming into a believer's life. (If believers would heed this, it would eliminate many of the arguments that arise over terminology.)

Other than these two events Acts records only four other times that the Holy Spirit came upon believers.

1. A little prayer band in Jerusalem was "filled" with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 4:8).
2. The Samaritans (half-Jews, half-Gentiles) "received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:15-17).
3. Paul was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17).
4. The disciples of John experienced "the Holy Spirit came on them" (Acts 19:6).

One other fact is important. Other than Pentecost and Cornelius' house, the word *baptize* is used in connection with the Holy Spirit only once in the rest of the New Testament. That one reference is 1 Cor. 12:13: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body." That is, the Holy Spirit takes all believers and baptizes or immerses, places and positions them into the body of Christ — into the church, the universal church.

In conclusion, what does all this mean?

1. When a man grasps the gospel and believes, really believes, the Holy Spirit enters his life. He *comes upon*, *falls upon*, *pours*, *fills*, *baptizes* (immerses) Himself into the life of the believer. This is a personal *experience*. This act of the Spirit takes place in the life of the believer. The believer *experiences* the Spirit coming into his life. The believer receives the Spirit *experientially*.

2. When a man grasps the gospel and believes, really believes, the Holy Spirit takes him and *baptizes* or immerses, and places him into the body of Christ, which is God's Church. The believer does not feel or experience this act. It is an act of God that takes place in heaven. The believer is *counted* as a child of God. He is *counted* as a member of the body, of the church. This is a *position*, not an experience, which the believer feels. It happens once-for-all. The believer is adopted as a child of God — irrevocably. It is an eternal *position*, an eternal sonship. The believer becomes a member of God's Church — positionally (1 Cor. 12:13).
3. After a man is saved, he is to be filled and kept on being "filled with the Spirit" — day by day (Eph. 5:18; see Jn. 14:21, the word "manifest"). The early believers were continually filled (Acts 4:8, 31). □

I. Acts 02:01 Feast of Pentecost; The Providence of God

There was God's providence. The Feast of Pentecost needs to be understood in order to see God's providence at work. Pentecost was celebrated fifty days after the Passover. It was also known as the "Day of the First Fruits" (Num. 28:26), or the "Feast of Weeks" (Exo. 34:22), or the "Feast of Harvest."

Pentecost was a glorious day of celebration, a day when the people were to heap praise and thanksgiving upon God. There were three particular reasons for which they were to thank God.

1. The harvest of the fields. Note the very name of the Feast says that it is a celebration of the "First Fruits." It was celebrated when the first fruits of the harvest began to come in, which was around the first of June. It actually opened the harvest season.
2. The Exodus, the deliverance of the nation Israel from Egyptian bondage (Dut. 16:12). The people were to thank God for the day he delivered them out of slavery.
3. The giving of the law upon Mt. Sinai (Exo. 19-20). This was the day the people were constituted as a nation, as the great nation of Israel. They were to live as God's very own people upon earth. They were to thank God for Himself and for His law, the rules and principles He had given to govern their lives and nation. It is important to note that the Jews figured the law had been given to Moses fifty days after the Exodus.

Now note the providence of God, how all three events were fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit.

1. When "the day of Pentecost came" the first fruits were born — the church itself and the first harvest of souls. The new beginning, that is, the filling of the Holy Spirit, began fifty days after Jesus' death and resurrection (Acts 2:4).
2. The coming of the Holy Spirit had a very specific purpose. The Holy Spirit was to live and work within the heart of man, to deliver and free him from the enslavements of

this world — from sin, death and hell. The Holy Spirit came to set man at liberty even as God had delivered the Jews out of Egyptian slavery (2 Cor. 3:17: see Jn. 16:8-11).

3. The coming of the Holy Spirit was two things.
 - a. It was the birth of the church, the new people of God. People who truly came to God were now to be sealed and known by the presence of the Holy Spirit, by His very presence within their hearts and lives.

2 Cor 1:21-22 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Eph 1:13-14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- b. It was the institution of the new law, the new rule and principle of God. Man is now to be guided by the Spirit who empowers him to live right and to serve Christ.

John 14:26 “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

John 16:13 “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

Rom 8:14 Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

1 Cor 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

ACTS 02: 01 JEWISH FEASTS

There were three major Feasts celebrated by the Jews. Each had been instituted by God to celebrate significant events in both the daily life and history of the people and their nation. But God also had something else in mind as well, the coming of His Son and the birth of His followers. Therefore each of the Feasts find their fulfilment in Christ and His Church.

1. There was the “Feast of the Passover.” It was a week of giving thanks...

- for God’s deliverance out of bondage and slavery, looking back to their forefathers’ slavery under Egypt.

The Passover Feast was fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ. Christ was the “Lamb of God” who was to die for the sins of the world. He and His death had been symbolized in the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. (See notes, Mt. 26:17-30; Lk. 22:7-23.)

2. There was the “Feast of the First Fruits.” It was a day of giving thanks...

- for the birth and growth of the new crops, the reaping of the first fruits of the earth.
- for the birth of their nation at Mt. Sinai.

This Feast was fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the day when the church was born and the first of God’s new people were reaped. (See note, Acts 2:1.)

3. There was the “Feast of Tabernacles.” It was a week of giving thanks...

- for the end and completion of the harvest season, the journey of toil and struggle experienced in gathering the harvest.
- for the end of their nation’s wilderness wanderings under Moses.

The “Feast of Tabernacles” is yet to be fulfilled. It will be fulfilled when our Lord returns. The Feast will symbolize our joy, liberty and victory through the wilderness wanderings of life and the glorious provision of God, that of living and serving eternally in His wonderful presence (Zee. 14:16). (See note 1, Jn. 7:37.) □

II. Acts 02:01 Obedience

There was man obeying. Note: the believers were in “one place,” in the city of Jerusalem precisely where Christ told them to go and wait upon the coming of the Holy Spirit. They were obedient — obedient despite the great danger the Jerusalem authorities posed to them. (See note, Acts 1:12-15.)

Thought 1. One thing is absolutely essential if a believer wants to receive the fullness of God’s Spirit: *obedience*. The believer must obey Christ and follow His instructions.

John 14:15-17 “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

John 14:23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

III. *Acts 02:01 Unity*

There was the spirit of being together in one mind. (See *One Accord*, Acts 1:14.)

IV. *Acts 02:02–04 Infilling of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost*

There was the Spirit's infilling. Note the word "suddenly." The Holy Spirit came suddenly, abruptly, unexpectedly, the kind of abrupt happening that jolts and startles a person. God was dramatizing the supernatural and precious significance of the event.

1. There was a mighty sound that filled the room.
 - a. The sound was from heaven, that is, from God. It came from God's activity, not from the activity of natural causes upon earth. It was supernatural. God created sound for this very special occasion.
 - b. The sound was like the blowing of a *violent* wind. It was not wind, but a sound like the deafening roar or blast of a strong wind (see a hurricane, tornado or gale).
 - c. The sound filled *all the house*, that is, it was localized upon the house where they were *sitting*. Why? There are at least three reasons.
 - => First, people needed to be startled and alarmed, attracted to gather from all over Jerusalem, seeking to know what had happened. An audience needed to be gathered for the first preaching of the gospel.
 - => Second, the mighty power of the Spirit needed to be symbolized and dramatized for the disciples. They needed strong confidence instilled within them in order to stand and preach the gospel before the very persons who had crucified the Lord and who had hunted them down as accomplices.
 - => Third, the disciples would learn how Christ wanted them to preach the gospel. The presence of the Holy Spirit upon them would either bring people flocking from all over, asking what had happened or lead them to the people whom they were to reach.
2. There was the appearance of *cloven tongues (diamerizomenai)*. The Greek means a tongue that was cloven, that is, torn apart. The idea is that a single tongue appeared and then began to split and divide itself, resting upon each of the disciples.
 - a. The tongues were not fire, but *like fire*; that is, they only looked like fire. They were a brilliant, luminous, fire-like substance created by God to dramatize the moment of the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples.
 - b. The tongue of fire that first appeared symbolized the presence of the Holy Spirit which was to dwell in the midst of God's people as a whole. When He began to divide into many tongues of fire and to rest upon each believer, He was symbolizing that He was to dwell within each believer as well as within the whole body of believers. (See notes, 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20.)

Note the words, “He came to rest” (*ekathisen*). The word is singular, not plural. Scripture does not say “they came to rest,” but He, the Holy Spirit Himself, was descending and resting upon *each* of the disciples. They were not receiving “tongues of fire” but the Spirit of God.

Note also that the Spirit appeared in the form of a tongue of fire. The tongue symbolizes the instrument of speaking and preaching and sharing the gospel. The Holy Spirit was to be the burning power of the tongue, of the convicting message to be proclaimed.

3. There were the results which were twofold.

a. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. (See *Holy Spirit*, Acts 2:1-4.)

First, both the body (church) and each individual believer were filled. They were “all filled” with the presence and power of the Spirit — all of them corporately and each of them individually. It was both a corporate and a personal, individual infilling. Each believer had been commanded to wait for the baptism of the Spirit, and each one was to be so filled with His presence and power. It was a command to the individual believer as well as to the corporate body. Each one was to experience and know His grace and power and fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).

Thought 1. A critical point is often ignored and neglected. The command to be filled with the Spirit is still God’s command to every believer, both individually and corporately (the church).

Eph 5:18 *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Thought 2. How neglectful the church is! Ignoring and neglecting the command “[to seek to] be filled with the Spirit.” How many churches actually meet together to pray and wait for the filling of God’s Spirit?

Luke 11:13 *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

Second, the disciples were given the gifts of the Spirit to carry on the work of the ministry upon earth. This fact is not mentioned here, although it is certainly to be demonstrated in the preaching and witnessing about to take place. The giving of the Spirit’s gifts is covered in Ephesians.

Eph 4:8, 11-12 *This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”....It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Eph 1:19-20 And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

- b. The disciples began to speak in other tongues (see *Tongues*, Acts 2:4).

ACTS 02:04 TONGUES; HOLY SPIRIT

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 02:04

What is meant by “other tongues” here? Note two things.

1. “Other tongues” definitely means foreign languages (see verse 6-13). The disciples were supernaturally witnessing and preaching in the languages of the different nationalities gathering together. Scripture is so clear about this that there can be no reasonable doubt without really twisting the Word of God.
2. “Other tongues” could also mean the *tongues* or ecstatic utterance covered in 1 Corinthians; that is, it could have been what is commonly called the *heavenly* or *prayer language* (1 Cor. 14:2,14. See notes, 1 Cor. 14:1-40 for discussion on *Tongues*.) An ecstatic worship could be taking place while the disciples were experiencing the infilling of the Holy Spirit. There seems to be some time between the moments of infilling and the crowds arriving to see what caused the explosive sound or noise (v. 2). And there can be no doubt that the disciples were flooded with joy, an ecstatic worshipful joy. They now knew the most wonderful things...
 - Christ was in them. His Spirit had actually entered into their hearts and lives. Their wonderful Lord had returned to them just as He had said He would.
 - They were filled with a deep sense of His presence and power, His concern and love for the world. His courage and drive to share the great news of the glorious gospel.

One thing needs to be noted, however: the words “as the Spirit enabled them.” They spoke in tongues “as the Spirit enabled them.” This may indicate a clear difference from the gift of tongues in 1 Cor. 14, a clear difference in this sense:

=> All gifts once bestowed by the Spirit are thereafter exercised by the believer as the believer wills to use them. In fact, in order to be faithful, the believer *has* to use his gifts as need or as opportunity arises. This is clear from 1 Cor. 14:28-33.

=> The gift of tongues here in Acts 2 says that the gift was supernaturally exercised by the Spirit, not by the individual believer. □

V. *Acts 02:05–11 Witnessing*

There was witnessing — God-fearing men heard the Word. Witnessing is also a result of being filled with the Spirit. Note several things.

1. Devout men, Jewish pilgrims who had come from *all over the world*, had returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the “Feast of the First Fruits.” The words *God-fearing* (*eulabeis*) means reverent, worshipful, careful. It means persons who handle spiritual matters carefully.
2. The words “when they heard this sound” seems to be saying it was the news of the disciples’ behaviour that brought the crowd together. But the Greek says, “When this sound was heard” (*genomenes tes phones tantes*). It was apparently the sound of the thunderous blast caused by God that brought the people rushing to the scene.
3. The crowd heard an amazing thing — the disciples supernaturally speaking in their own tongue (dialect, language) (see vv. 6, 8, 11).
4. The number of dialects and languages spoken included most of those from the known areas of the world at that time. Luke’s purpose in giving the list seems to stress that people from all over the world were present for Christ to save and to send back to their native lands as servants of His, servants to proclaim the message of the glorious gospel.
5. What the crowd heard in their native languages was “the wonderful works of God,” the personal witness of the gospel, the very things Peter was about to preach to the whole crowd (vv. 14-40).

Thought 1. Note how the groundwork for preaching is first laid by personal witnessing. (See *Witnessing*, Acts 1:8.)

VI. *Acts 02:12–13 Reaction to the Gospel*

There were different reactions. All were *amazed* (*existanto*) and astonished, marvelling at what was happening. There was a twofold reaction.

1. Some were *perplexed* (*dieporounto*) attracted and wondering, at a loss as to what was happening. But they were attracted to seek meaning in it all.
2. Others simply mocked, made fun of, accused the disciples of being drunk. (Just imagine the ecstatic joy flooding their hearts for them to behave in a way to cause such a charge! Where is the infilling of such joy today?)

2 Cor 6:2 *For he says, “In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation. ■*