

Pentecost

Acts 2 v 1-21

Context:

In our last study we explored the theme of the ascension of Jesus when Jesus left earth to return to the Father 40 days after his resurrection from the dead. Before his departure he told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for an unspecified period of time until the power of the Holy Spirit had come upon them. Then they were to go to the ends of the earth as witnesses for Jesus. The Feast of Pentecost ('Shavuot' in Hebrew, translated as 'Weeks' in English) was just 10 days away. Let's join the disciples as they gathered in Jerusalem on that important feast day.

Observation:

1. As the disciples were gathered together on the Day of Pentecost, what did they hear and what did they see (v 2-3)?
2. What was the effect of these phenomena on the disciples and what did they do as a result (v 4)?
3. Who else was gathered in Jerusalem that day (v 5) and from which countries did they come (v 9-11)?
4. What was the reaction of this multi-cultural crowd and why (v 6-8)?
5. What was the content of the disciples' message (v 11b)?
6. What two reactions were present in the crowd (v 12-13)?
7. Who stood up to explain the event (v 14)?
8. What explanation does Peter give for what they had just witnessed (v 15-21)?

Meaning:

1. Why do you think the Holy Spirit manifested himself in a way that sounded like wind and looked like fire? What do these symbols tell us about the Holy Spirit?
2. In light of Jesus' words in Acts 1:8, why do you think the ability to speak in other languages was such an appropriate result of being filled with the Spirit?
3. Three Old Testament references help us to understand what was going on at Pentecost. First, there is a parallel with the story of the Tower of Babel (see Genesis 11 v 1-9) – how do these two events compare and contrast?
4. Second, Pentecost (or the Feast of Weeks/Shavuot) was a summer harvest festival for the Jews and also marked the time when God gave the Law to Moses at Mt Sinai after the Exodus. Looking at 2 Corinthians 3:6-18, how do the Law of Moses and the Spirit given at Pentecost compare and contrast? [Note also the lovely contrast between Exodus 32 v 28 when the Law was given and Acts 2 v 41 when the Spirit was given.]
5. Third, Peter says that Pentecost was a fulfilment of Joel 2:28-32. How does what happened at Pentecost fulfil this prophecy?
6. What do Joel and Peter say is the ultimate result of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (v 21)?

Application:

1. Note that Acts 2:4 says that *all* the disciples were filled with the Spirit and 2:38b-39 promises that *all* who are called by God receive the Spirit and Romans 8:9 says that if a person doesn't have the Spirit they don't belong to Jesus. So, how do you feel knowing that,

as a Christian, you have the Spirit, and in what ways do you experience the presence of the Spirit in your life?

2. Why do you think it was essential for the disciples to receive the Spirit before they went out to evangelise (Acts 1:4)? Why is it essential for us too?
3. The apostle Paul teaches that, though the Law of Moses was holy, righteous and good, it became oppressive to the Jews because their sinful hearts prevented them from keeping it. Read Galatians 5:16-25 – what good news about the work of the Spirit does Paul expound in these verses? How does this resonate with your own life and experience?

Pray:

- Thank God for the gift of the Spirit and all his benefits.
- Pray for power to share the good news with others.
- Pray for power to live a life pleasing to God, overcoming sin and walking in step with the Spirit.