

Lent-Easter Study 12 BPUC
Pentecost – Birth of the Spirit-empowered Church Acts 2:1-17a

2 *On the day of Pentecost^[a] all the believers were meeting together in one place. ²Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages,^[a] as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.*

⁵At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. ⁶When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. ⁷They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, ⁸and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! ⁹Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!" ¹²They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other. ¹³But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!"

¹⁴Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. ¹⁵These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. ¹⁶No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.

Q.1. What was celebrated at 'Pentecost' by the Jews in Jesus' day? By what other names was the festival called? See Deut 16:9-11, Leviticus 23:15-16, Exod 23:15; 34:22, Num 28:26.

Q.2. If you heard 'a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm' what would you think and feel?

Q.3. What part of v.3 'what looked like tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them' do you think is important and why?

Q.4. What might the 'fire' of v.3 represent?

Q.5. V.4 Why was 'everyone present... filled with the Holy Spirit'?

Q.6. V.4 everyone present ... began speaking in other languages,^[a] as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. How do you understand what happened and why?

Q.7. What might Luke mean by 'devout Jews' being in Jerusalem v.5?

Q.8. When all these international Jews vv.9-11 heard 'their own languages being spoken by the believers. ⁷They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all Jews from Galilee". Why mention 'Galilee'?

Q.9. V.11. 'We all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done.' What were the believers likely to have been praising God about?

Q.10. Why might some 'sneer' and say 'they're just drunk' v.13?

Q.11 When Peter captured the crowd's attention, was he speaking in 'other languages' v14? Why not?

Q.12. In vv.16ff Peter explains the speaking in other languages as a fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. What is the key theme of vv.17-18?

Application: Q.13. Look at Gal 5:22-23 and rate yourself against each. How can you improve 'being led by the Spirit' v.25?

Acts 2:1-17a (my suggested answers)

NB. Please answer the questions yourself. We all have different ways of answering; God may give you greater insights than mine. Put 'John thinks' ... before each answer.

Q.1. Pentecost celebrated the first-fruits of the coming harvest 50 days after Passover. It was also called the feast of Weeks (7) or harvest.

Q.2. I would be scared and apprehensive – windstorms can be dangerous.

Q.3. Two things seem important to me. The 'fire' (see Q.4) and the fact that the fire 'settled on each of them'. This is a key new covenant theme: the Holy Spirit is with every believer (not just a select few as in the OT)

Q.4. The fire represented two ideas: power and purity. Power to be brave: to love and to know what and when to speak up for God.

Q.5. See Q.2. It is a NT theme that God wants to use everyone of us. To do that best we should be 'filled' by the Spirit? Everyone then was filled in order to go out bravely and speak about God's wonderful deeds v.11.

Q.6. It seems that the Spirit gave each believer the ability to speak another, previously unknown language. This captured the crowd's attention as 120 Spirit-filled believers poured out into the streets – telling everyone about God's marvellous deeds and praising him in many different languages. They don't seem to be talking here about Jesus – Peter does that later in vv.22-36 in one language. This speaking in tongues is not the same as in 1 Corinthians 12-14. There it appears to be 'languages of angels' (13:1) and not understandable to any hearers without interpretation.

Q.7. 'Devout Jews' were those who had come for the Day of Pentecost – to obey God's instructions about attending this festival, see OT verse in Q.1.

Q.8. The crowd were astonished at the believers' ability to speak all sorts of languages because Galileans were considered uneducated country hicks.

Q.9. The Psalms are full of expressions of praise to God for his mighty deeds. I assume these Spirit-empowered believers were reciting such Psalms (e.g. Ps 23, 100) and also that God was fulfilling key prophecies in their day.

Q.10. Some sneered accusing them of being drunk because other languages may sound like gibberish or the slurring of words. Also being Galileans was another reason to ridicule them.

Q.11. Peter was speaking Greek because it was the trade-language, and everyone gathered would know enough Greek to understand him. While the believers had declared the mighty deeds of God in various languages (v.11) it doesn't follow that they could give a full, detailed Gospel message as Peter does in vv.17-36.

Q.12. The key 3 themes of Joel 2:28ff are: i. v.17 the coming of 'the last days' (= the long-awaited time of God's action in history to save and restore his people); ii. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit – as in the upper room – as Jesus promised – to birth and empower the Church; iii. The Spirit filling 'everyone' – men, women, young, old, slave, free etc vv.17-18 no one (who repents see v.38) is excluded.

Q.13. We can all improve being filled and led by the Holy Spirit. Each of the fruit is a challenge – some will do better with some fruit – others will do better with other fruit.