

Acts 2

Read Acts 2:1-13

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
In the same way that thousands of Jews would descend on Jerusalem for The Passover celebrations, fifty days later, as many if not actually more Jews would return to Jerusalem for Pentecost, the feast that marked the summer harvest (it was also called 'weeks' or 'reaping').

The Apostles, and no doubt other disciples too, had also met to celebrate the feast together. In the mainly hot dry climate, the doors and windows of the houses would have been left uncovered to allow air to circulate in the heat. In many hot countries the afternoon is a time for resting away from the heat, so their day starts early. It seems that everyone here had gathered by breakfast time (v15)

2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.
What happened next was totally unexpected. 'Suddenly' there was the sound of a violent gale, but it seemed that it was only the sound – there was no actual violent movement of air! And it filled the whole house!

3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

Can anyone picture what that looked like?
(Mainly to get people to imagine it for themselves!)

4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Many people these days have experienced being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and 'speaking in tongues' but Pentecost was when it first happened – and as we shall see, onlookers were utterly amazed and perplexed. But what of the Disciples? **As they experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus, what feelings would they have had?**

(Surprise, joy, worship (see v11!), confidence, power – even reckless abandon?)

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in

our own tongues!’ 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’

It would appear that the disciples couldn’t stay indoors but went outside, not able to contain themselves. Those who had come to Jerusalem for the feast soon heard the uproar. These Jews, although devout, had never experienced the power of God present in people in this way and they were v7: *‘utterly amazed’* and v12: *‘amazed and perplexed’*. What they did agree was that it must have meant something important (v12).

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, ‘They have had too much wine.’

Their only possible way to explain a crowd of noisy men!

Now read Acts 2:14-41 (Perhaps 14-15, 16-21, 22-24,25-28, 29-36, 37-41)

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!

Before moving on, it’s as well to remember that Matthew recorded that only two months before in the Garden of Gethsemane *‘all the disciples deserted him and fled’* (Matthew 26:56). Then Jesus had been crucified and it seems that from then on the disciples had kept a low profile, meeting behind locked doors *‘for fear of the Jewish leaders’* (John 20:19, 26). The Jews were still a threat – in chapter four we will read of the arrest of Peter and John. But now it seemed they were all happy to go outside in reckless abandonment.

The Spirit, now living in Peter was able to bring to his mind words from the prophet Joel (2:28-32):

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20 The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21 And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

What an encouragement that must have been to Peter too! So he continued by boldly stating incontrovertible fact:

22 'Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

Having started, Peter confronted the crowd with the part they had played, either actively or passively, in the death of Jesus

23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Recognising our guilt and sin is the first step to accepting Jesus as saviour and Lord. That applies to us too!

24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Now Peter began to introduce the idea that 'This man' was much more than just a man. God had raised him to life, but more than that: because of who Jesus was 'it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him'. Again, prompted by the Spirit, he quoted from Psalm 16:8-11.

25 David said about him:

*"I saw the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.*

*26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,*

*27 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.*

*28 You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence."*

This would have been a very well-known prophetic scripture, but until now it was simply regarded as looking forward to a long-promised messiah.

29 'Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

The rumours about Jesus' resurrection that everyone had heard were true, and that pointed to the fact that he must be the Messiah. In proof of that he had now poured out the Holy Spirit on his disciples for all to see.

Peter again quotes from psalms (110:1)

*34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,
 "The Lord said to my Lord:
 'Sit at my right hand
 35 until I make your enemies
 a footstool for your feet.'"*

36 'Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.'

It was inescapable: Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah from God and he had come to establish his Kingdom.

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'

Again, the Holy Spirit took control, convicting people of their sin and opening their hearts to be prepared to accept Jesus. We should always be aware that this is the Spirit's work, not ours.

38 Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

It seems that repentance in Bible times literally meant to turn – either from evil, or towards good, or both; and it carried with it the sense of regret or remorse. It had to be a conscious decision and was often prompted or made possible by God.

Linking repentance with baptism was already a well-known practice, notably encouraged by John the Baptist. But now it would be linked to the personal receipt of the Holy Spirit who would come and bring the lordship of Jesus into the hearts of every believer.

39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off

At this time Peter may well have thought that the promise was only for the Jewish people, scattered far and wide throughout the known world. It would be some time before he recognised that it was for Jews and Gentiles alike (Acts 10).

– for all whom the Lord our God will call.'

This introduces the doctrine of election, or predestination. [\(It would take a whole study to cover this here – it has already been covered in the study on John 15d\)](#)

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' 41 Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Simple gospel preaching, controlled by the Holy Spirit, is still instrumental today in bringing many people to Christ around the world, sometimes in dramatic numbers. Here the original group of one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15) grew dramatically and could no longer be hidden!

Now read the final section, verses 42-47.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The early church was established. **What was its primary focus?**

Teaching:

Obviously there was so much these new converts needed to understand, and they were eager listeners – and good training for those Apostles who would soon become missionaries.

Fellowship:

The fellowship of Christian believers was something new and exciting. Christians have been adopted into God's family, and the family bond is hard to explain unless you have experienced it for yourself.

Breaking of Bread:

Originally this was simply eating together, a natural part of their new-found fellowship. As time went by, the Apostles would have taught the new converts about the events of Jesus' last supper and his commands to remember him. (Luke 22:19-20) because of course no Gospels had been written yet!

Elements may then have been incorporated into their meals. Eventually Paul had to regularise these 'Love Feasts' (1 Corinthians 11) and this would become the communion meal which has continued to be a central part of the life of the church.

Prayer:

This of course is the natural way for Christians to communicate with God not only to express our worship, submission, confession, and desires; but also to just spend time sharing with him about our life and the things that are important to us. It is also an essential time when we can listen to God too.

43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

Many translations use the word fear, instead of awe. How the tables had been changed from a few hours ago when the disciples had met together. Now it was the others who were in awe, perhaps literally frightened by what they had

seen. Besides speaking in different tongues, it would appear that the Apostles also had a healing ministry.

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

It seems that this was an unusual spontaneous reaction as the new 'family' of believers became aware of needs in their midst.

How can we overcome 'compassion fatigue' as we respond to the plight of Christians in need today?

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

Notice how these new Christians were keen for fellowship and gathered in the most obvious public meeting place – even though that would soon attract the attention of the Religious authorities!

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What particularly made this a golden time for the new church?

Thousands of new believers were eager to share their new experiences, and also to learn more of Jesus. The new church was pure and simple: without structures, buildings, councils, constitutions, rules, powerful pressure groups, divisions, denominations, etc.

What happened next? Possibly some '9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs' had to return home where doubtless they would have told of their experiences.

Others may well have decided that their new Christian life was worth giving up everything for and so remained in Jerusalem with the local converts who welcomed them into their homes. And all the time, more and more were converted and joined their number.