

Acts 2:1-21

Verse 1

¹ *When the day of Pentecost came,*

- Pentecost was a Hebrew holiday celebrated on the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week. It is discussed in Leviticus 23:15-16 and in Exodus 23:16 where it is called the Feast of Harvest. Deuteronomy calls it the Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:10). Its purpose was to show joy and give thanks to God for the wheat harvest.
- The word Pentecost means 50 in Greek and is taken from the number of days between this feast and the Passover. The Hebrew name for this feast is Shavuot.
- If Jesus' death and resurrection happened during Passover week, as the New Testament proclaims, then we know that these events happened about 50 days following the resurrection.

they were all together in one place.

- The "they" is the 11 disciples, all of them but Judas who had hung himself. It is reasonable to assume that Matthias, who had been elected to replace Judas, was also present.
- Some scholars think that the "they" is the 120 Christians referred to in 1:15. This is possible.
- If the group consisted only of the 12, the "place" mentioned was probably the upper room in which they were staying (1:13). However, if the reference is to the 120 Christians, it is unlikely that it happened in the upper room. It is more likely to have occurred in some more public place like the Temple.

Verse 2

² ***Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven***

- The word “suddenly” implies that this happened without warning or preparation. They were not expecting this event to happen nor did they do anything to cause it to happen.
- Wind/Breath/Spirit is the same word in Hebrew and in Greek. Wind/breath is a symbol of the Holy Spirit (see Ezekiel 37:9,14 and John 3:8).
- In this case, the Holy Spirit came with a physical, audible occurrence. Those present heard the Holy Spirit’s coming. It sounded like a violent wind blowing.

and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

- This is an indication to me that this event concerned only the 12 as they were sitting in a house. 120 believers could not have fit in a house. However, some scholars argue that the word “house” could refer to the Temple. I think that this is unlikely. If the event had taken place in the Temple, I think that that would have been noted and recorded in such a way as to indicate that it happened in the Temple. The language would have been specific, not vague.

Verse 3

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

- Not only did the Spirit manifest itself audibly, it was also manifested visibly. They saw tongues/flames of fire. Fire is a symbol of the presence of God (see Exodus 3:2).
- While this flame appeared to be one flame upon its arrival, it divided into separate flames with one flame resting above each person present.
- It is important to note that the wind and the flame are not the Holy Spirit. These are symbols of the Holy Spirit sent to establish its presence in reality in that place at that time. These symbols confirm the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 4

⁴ *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit*

- This means that the Holy Spirit took control of them in order to fulfill the promise that was given in Acts 1:8.

and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

- The promise of Acts 1:8 was that when the Holy Spirit came upon them they would be given power to bear testimony to Jesus Christ. This was the manifestation of that promise. They were able to speak the Gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- The “tongues” referred to here means languages. What happened was that the Holy Spirit empowered them to preach the Gospel in languages that they had never learned to speak. Verse 8 clearly indicates that these were known languages, for everyone heard the Gospel in his “native tongue.” Thus, they did not speak in a “prayer language” but in a recognizable language like English or French.
- This was of the Holy Spirit and not of men. They had not learned these languages before this occurrence. It happened instantaneously, and there is no indication that they retained this ability after this event.

Verse 5

⁵ *Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.*

- In Jerusalem, at that time, were Jews who came from every part of the earth. These were Diaspora Jews who had returned to Jerusalem for a visit or as permanent residents. They would have understood Hebrew but their native tongue would have been that of the part of the world from which they came.
- Perhaps these people had come to celebrate Shavuot.

Verse 6

⁶ *When they heard this sound,*

- Apparently, more than just the 12 or even the 120 Christians heard the noise as of a violent wind. The crowds in Jerusalem also heard it.

a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

- Apparently, the noise of the wind drew some people to investigate.
- When they came to the place where this event was happening, they were confused because they did not hear what was being said in Hebrew but in the language of their native birth.
- If the event began in the upper room, it must have moved outside into a more public place at some point, for now a large crowd was involved.

Verse 7

⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?”

- All of Jesus’ disciples, except Judas Iscariot, were from Galilee. It is highly unlikely that all of the 120 Christians were Galilean.

Verses 8-11a

⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?

⁹ Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, and Pamphylia, Egypt, and parts of Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism): Cretans and Arabs...

- This was clearly a miracle of speaking. The Christians were speaking the languages of these places and non-Christians confirmed the miracle.

Verse 11b

We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!

- Again, it was clear that the disciples were speaking in foreign languages.
- They were praising God in these languages or declaring his wonders, and the crowds understood what they were saying.

Verse 12

¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked each other, “What does this mean?”

- Some among the Jewish crowds did not understand what they were seeing. They had no explanation for the event.
- They wanted to understand how this was happening but there was no frame of reference to help them.

Verse 13

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

- Others found a rational explanation for what they could not explain. They concluded that the disciples must be drunk. They reached this conclusion because they can attain no other logical explanation. However, it was a shabby explanation. It allowed them to dismiss the occurrence but it did not explain the situation. Do drunken people speak in languages they have never studied and proclaim the wonders of God?

Verses 14-21

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! 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.’

- Now, filled with the Holy Spirit of God, Peter was emboldened to speak to a somewhat hostile crowd. Since he was in Jerusalem, at the time of the feast of Pentecost, the crowd was mostly Jews. Peter acknowledged this as he began his sermon.
- He called on them to pay careful attention to his words.
- He explained that the persons were not drunk as some in the crowd assumed because it was only nine in the morning (see Acts 2:13).

- He took a text from Joel 2:28-32. Explaining that this was the pouring out of God's Holy Spirit which was prophesied centuries before.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on Acts 2:1-21. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)