



Sunday School Lesson for September 4, 2005

Released on August 31, 2005

"The Coming of the Spirit"

Printed Text: Acts 2:1-8; 36-42

Devotional Reading: Psalm 16

Background Scripture: Acts 2

Time: A.D. 30

Place: Jerusalem

ACTS 2:1-8

1 And when the day of Pen'tecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling at Jeru'salem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, be-cause that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilae'ans?

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

ACTS 2:38-42

38 Then Pe'ter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Je'sus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

LESSON AIMS

1. Recount the events of the Day of Pentecost that accompanied the birth of the church.
2. Explain how the power of the Holy Spirit helped bring the church into being.
3. Identify one way of helping his or her church remember its first-century origins.

Introduction

A power blackout in August 2003 left millions in the eastern United States and Canada without electricity for many hours. Those hours without power demonstrated how much our high-tech society takes electrical energy for granted. The most sophisticated computers and other electronic devices are useless without power. Air conditioners, elevators, and even traffic lights are irrelevant when electricity stops flowing through the wires.

Jesus knew that His disciples could never carry out His Great Commission without divine power. Before He ascended back to the Father, therefore, He instructed the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until that power came. This week's lesson deals with the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and His subsequent work in the formation of the early church.

Lesson Background

The Old Testament predicted deliverance in terms of people flocking together as sheep in a pen (Micah 2:12, 13). The prophet Joel, though, gave the greatest of all prophecies of Christ's church. Joel saw Judah devastated by a terrifying locust plague (Joel 2:1-11). Yet God promised to remove the plague and pour out His blessings if the people repented (Joel 2:12-27). But as he looked into the distant future, Joel said that God planned to do more than restore crops. He also promised to pour out His Spirit (Joel 2:28, 29).

Centuries later, just before He returned to Heaven, Jesus told His disciples that He would send them the promised Holy Spirit. They were to remain in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). Shortly thereafter, God fulfilled His promise and poured out His Spirit. Peter explained, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16).

THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT

1. What was the Day of Pentecost? (vs. 1)

"Pentecost" means "fiftieth" and refers to the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22-23) or Harvest (Lev. 23:16), which was a Jewish feast day celebrated 50 days after Passover in May/June (Lev. 23:15-22). It was one of 3 annual feasts for which the nation (people from all parts of the country) was to come to Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14-19). Like other Jewish holy days, Pentecost had both agricultural (an offering of first fruits was made—two loaves were waved symbolically before the Lord, while animal sacrifices were presented as sin and peace offerings, Lev. 23:17-20) and religious significance (it commemorated the giving of the Mosaic Law).

All 3 feasts were joyful occasions, being a commemoration of the Exodus (the Feast of Unleavened Bread), an expression of gratitude to God for all the grain He had provided (the Feast of Harvest), and a thanksgiving for the final harvest (the Feast of Ingathering).

In Acts 2:1-2, the Holy Spirit came on this day as the first fruits of the believer's inheritance. Those gathered into the church then were also the first fruits of the full harvest of all believers to come after. What a wonderfully symbolic day for the birth of the church!

2. What were some of the physical manifestations that occurred on Pentecost?

(vs. 2-3)

There was the manifestation of the Holy Spirit which came quickly like a violent storm only there was no destruction. The disciples could not comprehend the significance of the Spirit's arrival without the Lord sovereignly illustrating what was occurring with a visible phenomenon. Just as the sound, like wind, was symbolic, the "cloven tongues like fire" were not literal flames of fire but supernatural indicators,

like fire, that God had sent the Holy Spirit upon each believer. In Scripture, fire often denoted the divine presence (Ex. 3:2-6). God's use of a fire-like appearance here parallels what He did with the dove when Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16). In vs. 4 it says they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost" - this filling is a repeated reality of Spirit-controlled behavior that God commands believers to maintain by continually living under the influence of the Spirit by letting the Word control them, pursuing pure lives, confessing all known sin, dying to self, surrendering to God's will, and depending on His power in all things. Being filled with the Spirit is living in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, letting His mind, through the Word, dominate everything that is thought and done. To be filled in the Spirit is the same as walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23).

3. What were the "other tongues" (Acts 2:4) that were spoken?

Other tongues were simply known languages. After the Holy Ghost had fallen upon them, they (the believers) began to speak in various languages. These languages represented all of the people who had come from all over the world to Jerusalem for the Pentecost. The languages spoken represented the following countries: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya, Cyrene, and Rome and every man was from his native land was able to understand what was being said. Note: "to speak with other tongues" means they spoke other languages besides their native language as directed by the Holy Spirit.

4. Why were there devout Jews in Jerusalem at this time? (vs. 5)

Devout Jews were Hebrew males who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost as part of observing the Jewish religious calendar. These men were to appear before the Lord three times in the year and trust the Lord to protect their landholdings while on pilgrimage to the festivals.

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

5. Why were the people confounded and amazed? (vs. 6-8)

After hearing about the "rushing wind" and "tongues of fire", it was obvious something extraordinary had taken place. When the people came together, they were amazed at what they saw and heard. First, they heard the message in their native languages and then they were amazed because the apostles were Galileans. Galileans were inhabitants of the rural area of northern Israel around the Sea of Galilee. Galilean Jews spoke with a distinct regional accent and were considered to be unsophisticated and uneducated by the southern Judean Jews. When Galileans were seen to be speaking so many different languages, the Judean Jews were astonished. This was a very great miracle and it was a miracle upon the mind. The Galileans not only never learned these languages, but had never learned any foreign tongue and had never so much as heard these languages spoken, nor had any idea of them.

Acts 2:38-42

6. What does the word "repent" mean? Why is it necessary to repent? (vs. 38)

Genuine repentance involves a couple of things. First of all, confession. Not just, "Lord, I'm sorry for my mistake," but, acknowledging we have sinned against God. Second, repentance includes taking full responsibility for our sin.

When a person "repents", he or she has a change of mind and purpose that turns him or her away from sin and back to God (1 Thess. 1:9). This change involves more than fearing the consequences of God's judgment. Genuine repentance knows that the evil of sin must be forsaken and the person and work of Christ totally and singularly embraced. Peter exhorted his hearers to repent; otherwise they would not experience true conversion. True conversion is believing that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin by accepting Him as your personal Savior so that you may have a right to eternal life.

What happens when we delay our repentance? Are there consequences? Yes - God's discipline is connected to repentance. The Bible teaches that God disciplines those who are disobedient.

7. How was Christian baptism similar to but different from John's baptism? (vs. 38)

The symbolism of John's baptism likely had its roots in Old Testament purification rituals (see Lev. 15:13-15). Baptism had also long been administered to Gentile proselytes coming into Judaism. The Baptism of John thus powerfully and dramatically symbolized repentance. Jews accepting John's baptism were admitting they had been as Gentiles and needed to become the people of God genuinely, inwardly (an amazing admission, given their hatred of Gentiles). The people were repenting in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival. The meaning of John's baptism differs somewhat from Christian baptism (Acts 18:25). Christian baptism altered the significance of the ritual, symbolizing the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12).

8. Who were those "afar off" (vs. 39)? Why is this important to us today?

Those who were "afar off" were the Gentiles who were apart from the true God just as we once were. However, salvation is available to everyone that believes. Just as Peter preached on Pentecost, today, God is still calling people to Himself. Every person who trusts in Christ alone for salvation, Jew or Gentile, is brought into spiritual union and intimacy with God. This is the reconciliation of 2 Cor. 5:18-21. The atoning work accomplished by Christ's death on the cross washes away the penalty of sin and ultimately even its presence.

THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

9. How many were converted on Pentecost? (vs. 41)

Those who received Christ as their Savior and Lord were immediately baptized. The number had grown to 3,000 converts who had come to Christ, and immediately got involved in worship, service, and learning.

10. What does verse 42 tell us about the early church?

In the early church, the foundational content for believer's spiritual growth and maturity was the Scripture, God's revealed truth, which the apostles received and taught faithfully. Because Christians become partners with Jesus Christ and all other believers (1 John 1:3), it is their spiritual duty to stimulate one another to righteousness and obedience; this is done through fellowshiping one with another. We, as believers in Christ, can still put this into practice today. When a new believer comes to Christ, we should put our arms around them and assist them in growing spiritually by encouraging them in the Lord, through prayer meetings, Bible studies, Sunday School, etc...

Works Cited: The MacArthur Study Bible

CONCLUSION

What a beginning the Church had! And the Holy Spirit continues to work in mighty ways yet today. Let us never forget our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Our Relationship with the Spirit

The Spirit inspired God's Word, so we must obey it without hesitation (2 Peter 1:21).

Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, so we must not gratify the desires of the flesh (1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 5:16).

The Spirit gives us the most personal of relationships with God, so we must trust God with a childlike faith (Galatians 5:16).

The Spirit seals us for "the day of redemption," so we must not grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

The Spirit makes people alive from the dead, so we must walk in newness of life and put to death the waywardness of the body (Romans 8:13; Titus 3:5).

The Spirit helps us to bear the fruit of the Spirit, so we need to walk with the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

The Spirit helps us with our prayers, so we must pray in faith without wavering (Romans 8:26; James 1:6).

The Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and will resurrect us, so we must live in hope (Romans 8:11).

The Holy Spirit inspired Peter with the gospel message. That message is still just as powerful as ever and still changes lives. The church, born by the Spirit's power, still moves throughout the world for good. Have you let God's Spirit transform your life?

PRAYER

Father, thank You for Jesus whom You have made both Lord and Christ. Thank You for the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Thank you for Your church that continues to be such a powerful force. May Your Spirit work in our lives and in our church so that Your will shall be done. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Study **Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-35** "The Believers Share".

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY:

Veronica Jasper veronica@jesusisall.com