

**Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work**  
**Sunday Morning Bible Study**  
**Lesson Two – Acts 2**

Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of Truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christlikeness of character apart from his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead. Luke is well aware of this and emphasizes the power of the Spirit throughout Acts, especially in Acts 2, which is all about the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit comes.

**OPEN**

- What difference do you think it would make if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from your life and your Christian community?

**STUDY**

- *Read Acts 2:1-13.* Pentecost brought to the apostles what they needed for their special role. Christ had appointed them to be his primary and authoritative witnesses and had promised them the reminding and teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost was the inauguration of the new era of the Spirit. Although his coming was a unique and unrepeatable historical event, all the people of God can now always and everywhere benefit from his ministry.

1. Describe in detail, as if you were a reporter covering an important story, what happened on the day of Pentecost.

**While the disciples were gathered together, suddenly there was a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem were bewildered because they were hearing the mighty works of God in their own tongues.**

2. What were the different reactions to these events?

**Many of the Jews were amazed because they were hearing the mighty works of God in their own languages (v. 11-12). Other people thought they were drunk (v. 13).**

3. When Luke spoke of the international nature of the crowd which collected, he was speaking from his own horizon—the Greco-Roman world situated around the Mediterranean basin, every nation in which there were Jews. This was the international, multilingual crowd which gathered around the 120 believers. Why do you think Luke emphasizes this fact?

**Because the point of Luke's 2<sup>nd</sup> text is to describe the movement of the Gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles, both in Jerusalem, and all over the Roman Empire.**

Discussion about the nature of speaking in tongues must not distract our attention from Luke's understanding of its significance on the day of Pentecost. It symbolized a new unity in the Spirit transcending racial, national and linguistic barriers. Ever since the early church fathers, commentators have seen the blessing of Pentecost as a deliberate and dramatic reversal of the curse of Babel.

4. *Read Acts 2:14-41.* What do you observe about Peter as he addresses the crowd?

**He speaks with boldness and a greater understanding of the Old Testament than I would normally expect from a fisherman.**

5. How does Peter explain these amazing events that have taken place at Pentecost?

**He indicates that it is a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (vv. 16-21) and the work of the risen Savior (v. 33).**

The best way to understand Pentecost is not through the Old Testament prediction, but through the New Testament fulfillment, not through Joel but through Jesus. As Peter summons the men of Israel to listen to him, his first words are of Jesus of Nazareth, and he goes on to tell the story of Jesus in six stages: his life and ministry, his death, his resurrection, his exaltation, his salvation and his new community.

Peter's conclusion is that all Israel should be assured that this Jesus, whom they had repudiated and crucified, God had made both Lord and Christ. Not of course that Jesus became Lord and Christ only at the time of his ascension, for he was (and claimed to be) both throughout his public ministry. It is rather that now God exalted him to be in reality and power what he already was by right.

6. On what basis does Peter announce that God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ (vv. 29-36)?

**Because Jesus, a descendent of David, was resurrected from the grave (v. 31).**

7. How did the people respond to Peter’s clear proclamation of the truth about Jesus and the truth about themselves (vv. 37-41)?

**The text says they were “cut to the heart” (v. 37). As a result, they asked Peter what they should do, and he told them to “repent and be baptized” (v. 38).**

8. Based on the information given in this passage, how would you summarize the message of Jesus?

**If one will repent of sins and believe in the person and work of the Lord Jesus, he will receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

9. *Read Acts 2:42-47.* What are the spiritual and practical results of the outpouring of the Spirit?

**Wonders and signs, all things in common, caring for those in need, eating together, favor with people, more and more people getting saved**

**Summary:** Our struggle is how to be faithful to this apostolic gospel while at the same time presenting it in a way which resonates with men and women today. What is immediately clear is that, like the apostles, we must focus on Jesus Christ. Peter’s beginning “Listen to this: Jesus...” must be our beginning too. But how? I have myself found it an aid to faithfulness to express the apostles’ message in the following framework: the gospel events, namely the death and resurrection of Jesus, the gospel witnesses, the Scriptures and the apostles, the gospel promises, the forgiveness of sin and the Spirit, and the gospel conditions, repentance with faith and baptism.

It is not enough to “proclaim Jesus.” For there are many different Jesuses being presented today. According to the New Testament gospel, however, he is historical (he really lived, died, rose and ascended in the arena of history), theological (his life, death, resurrection and ascension all have saving significance) and contemporary (he lives and reigns to bestow salvation on those who respond to him). Thus the apostles told the same story of Jesus at three levels—as historical event (witnessed by their own eyes), as having theological significance (interpreted by the Scriptures), and as a contemporary message (confronting men and women with the necessity of decision). We have the same responsibility today to tell the story of Jesus as fact, doctrine and gospel.

### **APPLY**

- How do you respond to the work and power of the Holy Spirit as you see it in this chapter?

- When have you seen and experienced the work of the Spirit in your life and Christian community?

- What do you need to do in order to more effectively proclaim the truth about Jesus to those who may not know him as the Lord and Christ?

**PRAY**

- Praise God for the work and power of his Holy Spirit. Ask him to teach you to understand and rely on his ministry.

All material taken from:

John Stott, *Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work*. Downers Grove, IL: IV Press, USA, 1998.