

Acts of the Apostles

Week 3 – Acts 2:1-41

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost (2:1-13)

- The early disciples were gathered together on Pentecost awaiting the promised Holy Spirit (2:1).
 - o Pentecost was a Jewish Festival that occurred 50 days after Passover.
 - o Later Rabbinic literature associated it with the gift of the law at Sinai and covenant renewal.
- The Spirit's descent upon the believers sounded like a loud, violent wind and was accompanied by what seemed to be tongues of fire upon each believer (2:2-3).
 - o The Jewish writer, Philo, spoke of God's voice as both a "wind" and a "fire."
 - o This physical manifestation of the Spirit's descent echoes the Spirit's descend upon Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:22).
- Immediately, the Holy Spirit's work moves in a universal direction (2:4-10).
 - o The text stresses that the Spirit filled "all of them."
 - o God's Spirit has always been at work in the world, but in the past fell only on a select few individuals. He now fills the life of every believer.
 - o The universality of the Spirit's mission is emphasized by the multiplicity of languages the disciples begin to speak. Speaking in tongues here is clearly meant to be understood as speaking in foreign human languages and not some kind of angelic language that needs to be interpreted (see 1 Corinthians 14:5, 13, 27).
 - o Some scholars see Pentecost as a reversal of the curse of Babel (see Genesis 11:1-9).
 - o The filling of the Spirit will be a major theme throughout the book of Acts (see 4:31; 8:17; 10:44-47; 11:15-17; 19:1-6).
- This manifestation of the Spirit's power invokes a response from those who have heard the disciples preaching in their native languages.
 - o Some search for meaning in the event (2:12).
 - o Others dismiss what they see and hear as nothing more than drunkenness (2:13).
- The Spirit's work at Pentecost empowers the collective work of the church for the clear goal of spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth in an incarnational way.

Peter Addresses the Crowd (2:14-41)

- Empowered by the moment, Peter seizes the moment to explain what God was doing to the onlookers (2:14-15).
 - o Peter's sermon on the heels of the Spirit's descent further echoes Jesus's own experience of preaching a sermon in Nazareth after the Spirit's descent during his baptism (Luke 4:16-30).

- Like Jesus did (Luke 24:44-48), Peter explains the current work of God's Spirit by referencing the Hebrew Scriptures, specifically, Joel 2:28-32.
 - Joel prophesized a day when God would pour out his Spirit on "all people."
 - "All people" would include people of every age, socio-economic status, and gender.
 - Peter cuts off Joel's prophecy midsentence emphasizing the saving work of God: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (2:21).
 - Peter equates Jesus with the Lord in Joel's prophecy reflecting the fact that the disciples came to view Jesus as God almost immediately after his resurrection.
- Peter's sermon is straightforward (2:22-24).
 - He bears witness to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
 - He asserts that Jesus's death, though contrary to Messianic expectations, was according to God's "deliberate plan and foreknowledge" (2:23).
 - Peter asserts that it is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that has changed everything (2:24-36).
 - This why they now consider Jesus to be "Lord and Messiah" (2:36).
 - They realize that the resurrection was foretold in the Scriptures.
 - He quotes Psalm 110 and 16 following Jesus's own lead in explaining how the scriptures prophesied about him (Luke 20:41-44).
- Some of the people respond to Peter's sermon by asking him, "What do we do?" Peter responds clearly, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ" (2:37-41).
 - Repentance involves turning to God and is a key theme of Acts (3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18, 20; 28:27).
 - Peter's call to action stresses some key doctrines of the truth.
 - Everyone has sinned and is in danger of judgment.
 - Faith in Jesus involves believing the testimony of the disciples concerning Jesus's death and resurrection and turning to Jesus for new life. New life in Christ involves both forgiveness of sins (justification) and a new way of living (sanctification).
 - The gospel is both a warning and good news. You cannot have the good news without the warning.
- Baptisms serves as both the sign of our repentance and the symbol of God's gift of salvation.
- Remarkably, three thousand people believed and were baptized (2:41).

Sources

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I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 1980).