

The Holy Spirit would come upon individuals in the Old Testament for a period of time in order to temporarily empower them for a specific task. The second chapter of Acts, however, describes the arrival of the Holy Spirit in a unique way that had not happened before. The Holy Spirit came to permanently indwell those who have trusted Jesus Christ for salvation.

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

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come” – The Feast of Pentecost (also known as the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Harvest) came 50 days after the Passover (seven weeks – Deut. 16:9-10) and was a celebration of the goodness of God in providing the harvest. Jesus was crucified at Passover and so this was 50 days after the crucifixion.

“they were all with one accord [one mind or purpose] in one place” – In obedience to Christ’s last command (Acts 1:4), the apostles and those with them were in one place (likely the upper room) engaged in prayer and supplication (Acts 1:13-14). They had one purpose in mind: awaiting “the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4-5).

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.

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing [to move] mighty [violent; forceful] wind” – It’s not clear if Luke is saying that this sound came from heaven because he knew that it came from God, or if it literally came from the skies. Since they were likely indoors, the former interpretation is probable. This sound was of a wind that was strong enough to move things.

“and it filled all the house where they were sitting” – The sound was loud enough that you could hear it throughout the house. Note that it does not say that a wind filled the house – only the sound of a wind. Wind is often used to picture the Spirit of God in scripture.

“And there appeared unto them cloven [divided] tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them” – This was not literal fire, but a manifestation of the glory of God, much like the burning bush that Moses saw (Ex. 3:2-6). Evidently it appeared in the room and then divided into tongues that sat on each person that was present. It is worth noting that the sound of the wind and appearance of the cloven tongues of fire are a unique event that is not repeated in scripture. Pentecostal churches teach that these cloven tongues of fire was what John the Baptist was talking about when he said that Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” However, John was speaking of two baptisms: one of the Holy Spirit and the other of fire. Those who repented and believed would be baptized with the Holy Spirit while those who did not would be baptized with the fire of judgment (Matt. 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17).

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

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” – In contrast to the OT where the Holy Spirit would temporarily “come upon” people at times (sometimes even on those who were in rebellion against the LORD - 1 Sam. 19:2-24), those in the upper room were filled and became indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

“and began to speak with other [another of a different kind] tongues [languages]” – They spoke in languages that were not their own. This is different than the “unknown tongues” that Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. 14, which one commentator believes refers to counterfeit pagan gibberish that come from the mind of the speaker. The “other tongues” in this verse refers to genuine human languages, as demonstrated in vs. 6-11.

“as the Spirit gave them utterance” – The source of these other tongues was not the minds of those speaking because it was the Holy Spirit supplying the words that they were speaking. They did not have to be coached, taught, or trained into speaking with other tongues since the Holy Spirit was the source.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” – Pentecost (the Feast of Harvest) was one of the three holidays on the Jewish religious calendar when Hebrew men were required to come to the temple/tabernacle to appear before the LORD (Ex. 23:14-19). These men were devout Jews who lived in other countries and had made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to celebrate Pentecost. It is possible that many of these had come for Passover and had remained until Pentecost.

“Now when this was noised abroad [phone [fon-ay] - sound], the multitude [a great number] came together” – The Greek word translated “noised abroad” (where we get our word “phone” as in “telephone”) can refer to the sound of an inanimate object or the sound of someone speaking. So it is unclear if this verse refers to the sound of the rushing mighty wind or the sound of 120 people speaking in other tongues. Apparently the sounds of either/both attracted the attention of a large crowd of people in the city (v. 41 implies that there may have been as many as 3,000) and they came together to see what was happening.

“and were confounded [confused; bewildered; disturbed], because that every man heard them speak in his own language” – The people that had gathered did not know what to make of what they were witnessing because they did not understand what was going on. These Jews had grown up speaking the language of the nation where they were living, and yet here in Jerusalem each was hearing someone in this group of 120 speaking his native language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

“And they were all amazed [astonished; astounded] and marvelled [wondered]” – The people that gathered were surprised and astonished at what they were hearing. They wondered what was going on, particularly seeing who was doing the speaking.

“saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?” – People from Galilee spoke with a distinctive accent and were considered to be uneducated and unsophisticated, so encountering a Galilean who was multilingual would certainly be rare. Witnessing 120 multilingual Galileans in one place would have been unheard of.

“And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” – The Jews mentioned in v. 5 had all been born in other countries and had made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Pentecost (or had been there since the Passover). They certainly would have never expected to encounter people speaking their native tongue in Jerusalem.

Verses 9-13: Several nations from surrounding regions are listed as being the native lands of many of these Jews (v. 9-11). Some of these Jews were proselytes, which were Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism (v. 10). Thus there was a good number of native languages represented that were being spoken by the 120 Galileans. The Jews in the crowd did not understand what was going on, although some were critical and tried to explain the situation away by saying that it was the result of these 120 Galileans being drunk.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day.

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice” – Peter becomes the spokesman for the group. This Peter is quite a bit different from the timid and fearful Peter we’ve seen before. The Holy Spirit has given him the courage and boldness to preach in the name of Jesus Christ.

“and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words”

– Peter addresses the local Jews, who were likely the skeptics that had tried to attribute what was being heard to drunken Galileans.

It’s probable that these local Jews did not understand the languages being spoken and so they thought it was drunken gibberish.

However, the Jews from other nations recognized that these were genuine languages from their homeland and even understood what was being said (v. 11). Peter also addresses those “dwelling” in Jerusalem, which would include those that were there for Pentecost.

He wants to set the record straight on what they are witnessing.

“For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day” – The Jews measured time as the number of hours since sunrise, thus the third hour would be 9:00 am. The third hour was the time of prayer and morning worship and even intemperate Jews rarely began drinking at this hour. Peter’s defense is that it was too early for any self-respecting Jew to be drunk.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” – Peter points to Joel 2:28-32, quoting it in vs. 17-21. The context of the passage from Joel is talking about the kingdom of the Messiah on earth. Peter is not saying that this prophecy from Joel was being fulfilled but that what they witnessing was a taste of what would happen in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The same Spirit that will be poured out on all flesh in Joel’s prophecy is the same Holy Spirit that was producing what they were witnessing.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh” – In Christ’s kingdom, all flesh will have the Holy Spirit poured out on them. Obviously, that was not happening when Peter was speaking since “all flesh” was not receiving the Holy Spirit.

“and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” – The outpouring of the Spirit will produce these behaviors. The prophet seems to be emphasizing the widespread nature and overwhelming effect of this outpouring of the Spirit.

“And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” – The LORD repeats the promise that He will pour out His Spirit on those who belong to Him “in those days.” “In those days” refers to the days when Christ has established His kingdom on earth. The result of this outpouring is that His servants will “prophesy” (to speak forth under divine inspiration). There is no mention in Joel of tongues during the kingdom. Tongues were a sign in the early church intended to lead unbelievers to Christ (1 Cor. 14:22).

Verses 19-21: These verses continue Peter’s quotation from Joel 2, prophesying the supernatural and atmospheric signs that will be seen at Christ’s return to establish His kingdom (Matt. 24:29, Rev. 6:12).

Verses 22-36: Peter continues preaching to the crowd, citing a few of the Messianic prophecies that Jesus Christ has fulfilled as proof that He is the Christ (the Messiah).

Verses 37-47: The Holy Spirit convicted the hearts of many in the crowd and Peter tells them what they need to do to be saved. As a result, around 3,000 people got saved and formed a fellowship of believers that shared their worldly goods and worshiped God together.