

## Acts 2 (1-21) – The Big Picture of Pentecost

The question about what happened on Pentecost in Acts 2 is the same as those originally present – *what does this mean* (Acts 2:12)? Ironically, believers are divided over the event that united us. We can get a clear picture if we will back away a bit and look first at the forest instead of trying to identify each tree.

Since Pentecost predates Acts 2, we can better understand Acts 2 by first looking back further. Pentecost was celebrated 50 days after the Feast of First Fruits, 50 days from the crossing of the Red Sea, and now 50 days after Christ was resurrected that first Easter, when the Holy Spirit was poured out. Pentecost is also known as “Weeks” or Shavuot. Pentecost foreshadows the uniting of Jewish and Gentile believers into one body through the Holy Spirit, the coming of the Age of the Spirit, and the harvest time of the Great Commission.

There are parallels to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai and the Holy Spirit being poured out on Pentecost. The giving of the Law was where God had distinguished between two people, Jew and Gentile. On Pentecost, God broke down that wall of separation through Christ. The noise and the tongues of flame would have been viewed as a parallel to the mighty noise and fire at Sinai nearly 1,500 years earlier. On Pentecost 3,000 came to spiritual life; when the Law was given, 3,000 died (Exodus 32:28). The Old Covenant was initiated at Passover but formalized at Pentecost (when the Law was given). The New Covenant was initiated at Passover (Good Friday) and formalized at Pentecost.

The Spirit came in a way He had not come before. They did not pray to receive the promise they prayed as they waited on it. Though the Spirit has always been active, His relationship to the believer is now different under the New Covenant. He baptized (joined) believers into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13), a united people called the “body of Christ”.

In Acts 2, we see that the tongues that they spoke with (vs.4) were known human languages (vs.6-11). The words “tongue” and “language” are used interchangeably. Two Greek words are used: “glossa”, and “dialektos” (where we get our word “dialect” from). Vs.6 translates “dialektos” as “language” but vs.8 uses the word “tongue” for “dialektos”. Vs.4 and vs.11 use “tongues” for “glossa”. They proclaimed “the mighty works of God” (vs.11), but it was in a language they were able to “hear”, or in other words, understand, because it was their own language (vs.6, 8, 11). The narrative makes it clear what the tongues were.

The tongues (representing people’s, nations – cf. Revelation 7:9) were a representation that the barriers between Jew and Gentile had been broken down (cf. **Ephesians 2:11-22**), and that all who believe in Jesus are one in Christ by the Spirit of God (Romans 12:5). This was not about making a demarcation between people who speak with tongues and people who don’t. It was about the fact that the Spirit was given and the unity that was demonstrated.

The narratives in Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 (Peter retells the stories in Acts 11 and 15), are the fulfillment of what Jesus had promised in Acts 1:8, the thesis statement for the whole book. Jews (Acts 2), the hated, half-breed Samaritans (Acts 8), the Gentiles (Acts 10), and the disciples of

John the Baptist, people in transitional period between the OT and the NT Church (Acts 19), all were included in the manifestation of unity and spread of the Gospel.

The work of tongues was foundational in the development of the church, in its inauguration and the sign of its spread. Tongues were a sign; a visible manifestation that the Spirit was being given to all, salvation was for all nations, tribes, and “tongues”. Peter, in Acts 2:17-18, shows us that not only are all people groups potentially included, but all gender, age, and social groups are as well. That mission, that manifestation is complete. The point has been made; we are one body in Christ. The rest of the NT writing assumes and asserts that. This unity is not something to achieve, it is something to be recognized (Ephesians 4:1-6). 1 Corinthians 6:17 – We are one with Jesus and one with each other. Pentecost is cause for celebration, the reason for missions.

Many people have claimed an experience where they felt loved by God and/or had some sense of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, they might have served God and man in their giftedness in a way not previously developed. However, we do not have to deny the reality of a powerful, subsequent experience to defend the reality that what is happening in the Book of Acts is not speaking of a separation between believers. The body doesn't have any un-energized parts waiting for a “baptism”, it is a living organism that has been “baptized” with God's energy (1 Corinthians 12:13). This isn't about each person having to be initiated into some new power; this is about the fact that all believers have been initiated into the same power.

This “baptized into one body” and “all were made to drink of one Spirit” is not about some post conversion experience. The spread of the gospel as seen in Acts 2, 8, 10, 19 are instances where we see the infilling of the Spirit and outpouring of tongues as the manifestation of the unity of Christians. It is not the creation of some new disparity among Christians. This was and is about solidarity, not stages of growth, or a split between haves and have not's, it is that now we all are haves. It isn't a two tiered system of salvation, or sanctification, or service. It is entirely ironic to create a new wall when it was the old wall that was being torn down.

This was the beginning of the greater works Jesus was speaking of in John 14:12. They were not greater in power than those He performed (both raised the dead), but greater in extent. He was referring to the extent of the spiritual miracle of salvation. Jesus never preached outside of Palestine, yet His followers would spread the gospel throughout the world. The number of believers in Christ grew far beyond those that were numbered during His lifetime.

Acts 2:12 – what does this mean?

Acts 2:21 – everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13).

Acts 2:37 – what shall we do?

Acts 2:38 – identify with Christ, ask for the forgiveness of your sins and be baptized because you believe that all those who trust in Jesus are given the Spirit of God, adopted into His family.

Acts 2:39 – Have you repented? The only real wall between God and men is sin, but in Christ the final wall is broken down. God in Christ has broken down all racial, gender, age, and social barriers (Colossians 3:11). Have you embraced all God's children? All Christians are partakers of the Holy Spirit. That is the big picture of Pentecost.