

## **Acts 2:1-21** The Holy Spirit and Pentecost

Broadly speaking, there are three divisions of time:

- The period before Christ, from Creation to the Incarnation.
- The period covered by the 33 years of our Lord's earthly life.
- The period of time since Pentecost, the period in which we live.

The Gospels end with the ascending of God the Son as **Acts 2** opens with the descending of God the Holy Spirit. We have already seen that the Holy Spirit was very active before Pentecost; He indwelt, filled and empowered the Lord Jesus for His earthly ministry but up until then He had never come to dwell within believers and to be within them forever. Now, on the Day of Pentecost, He came to do just that - in fulfilment of the promise of the Lord Jesus in **John 14:16!**

**Acts 2:17:** “**And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh**”

- **Grammatical Usage:** “**pour out**” or in the Greek “ekcheo” meaning “bestow liberally”; “**flesh**” or “sarx” meaning, “kindred”.
- **Literal Interpretation:** And in days since Jesus God declared the bestowing ... unleashing... of the Spirit on all humanity.
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. No study of the Person of the Holy Spirit would be complete without considering the events in the opening verses of **Acts 2**. This is a great chapter: great as history, for it describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; great in inspiration, as the wonder of it grips you; and great from the point of view of instruction:

### 1. THE DAY OF PENTECOST DID NOT COME BECAUSE OF ANY HUMAN CONDITIONS THAT WERE MET ON THE PART OF THE DISCIPLES.

Pentecost was a pre-determined time in the mind of God, prophesied by Jesus in accordance with Israel's ecclesiastical calendar (**Leviticus 23:11-16**). In His sovereign will, the date of the coming of the Holy Spirit had been fixed to take place fifty days after the Passover. It is true in experience that there are conditions to be met if we would know the conscious presence and power of the Holy Spirit within us for life and service, but it is also true that the Day of Pentecost had to “come” per divine decree.

### 2. AS THE GREAT DAY ON GOD'S CALENDAR CAME, THE DISCIPLES “WERE ALL TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE”.

**Verse 1** tells us this; **Acts 1:15** tells us that there were about 120 of them. This proves a critical point unrelated to the numerical value or physical location, but spiritual disposition. The Holy Spirit is not going to fill anyone who willfully rejects Jesus Christ. He will not fill them because He has not even indwelt them; hence the reaction of **v. 12**.

### 3. THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY STRIKING MANIFESTATIONS OF HIS PRESENCE AND POWER.

**Vv. 2-3** tells how this event unfolded:

- Suddenly. Have you ever searched the Scriptures to note the things God has done suddenly? For example: The Flood; the destruction of Sodom; conversion takes place suddenly, as it did with Zacchaeus (**Luke 19:1-10**); Saul of Tarsus (**Acts 9:1-18**); and the jailer (**Acts 16:30-34**) - but in contrast, God forms the characters of His people slowly (**Malachi 3:3; Philippians 1:6**).
- Audibly, for we are told that a “sound...came from Heaven and filled the whole house.” How often, on the other hand, does God work silently, almost imperceptibly! Look up and compare **John 3:8**.
- Visibly. “**They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire...**” Just as the Holy Spirit was seen by John the Baptist to come on the Lord Jesus “**like a dove**” (**Matthew 3:16**), so He came upon these believers, not like a dove, the symbol of purity, but like a flame of fire, the symbol of cleansing and purification.

The wind and the fire were symbols of the work He had come to do in and through them. When Pentecost comes, there is a breeze and a blaze.

### 4. THE IMPORTANT THING THAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED, HOWEVER, IS THAT ‘THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT’.

They would not understand it, nor could they explain the philosophy of it, but they knew He had come! Let us always remember that it is not intellectual knowledge that counts, but spiritual experience; not knowing about Him, but knowing Him; and here we see a company of 120 that ‘they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.’

We should be careful in case the language used of the Holy Spirit in **v. 4** leads us to think of Him as a mere power or influence. The word ‘filled’ brings before us a mental picture of fluid, energy, breath, force, but (as we have seen in previous studies), the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead, and to be filled with Him means to be possessed, controlled, dominated by Him. It is possible to be filled with Satan (**Acts 5:3**). But God’s plan is that His people should be Spirit-filled so that their hearts and minds and wills are under the mastery of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit does not rob us of our true personality; Peter is still Peter, Paul is still Paul, yet the Holy Spirit is the One who is dominant in the lives of Peter and Paul.

### 5. ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME TO APPLY IN THE LIVES OF BELIEVERS ALL THAT THE LORD JESUS DIED, ROSE AGAIN AND ASCENDED TO HEAVEN TO MAKE POSSIBLE.

The Lord Jesus gave the ethics, the example and the pattern of the Christian life, but the Holy Spirit came to give the dynamic, the empowering and the energy for that life. Thus, we see that Pentecost was the complement of Calvary, for Pentecost made actual in the lives of men and women all that Calvary made possible. Without Pentecost, Calvary would never have been effective to redeem a lost world.

➤ **Conclusion:** Unsaved or unrepentant: both reject the leading of the Spirit.