

The Gift is Given—the Church is Born

Part 1

The stage has been set for one of the most thrilling moments in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan. Two strands of prophecy meet and blend together on this momentous day! Eight hundred years before the Day of Pentecost an Old Testament prophet by the name of Joel prophesied, saying, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (Joel 2:28). Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18) joins with Joel's prophecy and both find their fulfillment in the events of Acts chapter 2. In addition, the outpouring of the Spirit was an accompanying feature of the underlying promise given to Abraham and the patriarchs—that *all nations* would be blessed through Abraham and his descendants.

Bow in Prayer: Our Father, we stand in awe of You—the Mighty God who sovereignly orchestrates the events of history, so our very hearts might be filled with Your blessed Holy Spirit. We worship and adore You, our most gracious and omnipotent God!

Jesus had instructed His apostles to *wait* until they received the manifestation of God's empowering presence—the Holy Spirit. The second chapter of Acts gives us the amazing account of the Holy Spirit's first miraculous appearance among the believers of the early church.

Read Acts 2:1-13 out loud with expression. Ask God to bring this unprecedented event to life as you read and take in all that is being said.

1. a. Acts 2:1 sets the scene. What important facts are disclosed in the opening verse?
 - b. What was the Day of Pentecost? Use your Bible concordance or a Bible dictionary to learn about this Jewish feast. Write a brief summary below.

2. What was the significance of the Lord choosing the Day of Pentecost to celebrate the new harvest of souls?

Review Acts 2:2-4. Imagine yourself as one of the disciples, quietly praying together with other believers.

3. In your own words describe the startling things you would have seen and heard as the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out.

Acts chapter 2 signals the dawning of a new era in God's dealings with His people. The marvelous outpouring of God's Spirit to each individual believer provided the supernatural power to take the life-changing message of the Gospel to the ends of the earth—and the church was born!

Reread Acts 2:5-13.

4. a. What does verse 5 tell us about who was assembled in Jerusalem for Pentecost?
 - b. How many nations are named? Locate them on (Map 2, Pentecost in Jerusalem).
This map will help you visualize the size and extent of the multinational crowd!
5. What brought the huge crowd together where the believers were praying (verse 6)? What amazed them?
6. What truth about the kingdom of Christ was demonstrated through the international, multilingual crowd? (See Revelation 5:9.)
7. According to verse 11 what was the common topic of all the messages spoken in the various languages?

The public amazement and perplexity that accompanied this event led to various reactions and interpretations from the crowd.

8. From verses 11-13 list the various reactions of the multitude as they try to process this unusual phenomenon.
9. How do you respond to the work and power of the Holy Spirit as you see it in this chapter?

The combination of miraculous signs was a once-for-all unrepeatable historical event. Each outward sign, however, has lasting significance for all who have come to know God. The meaning and symbolism involved in these miraculous signs become more evident when we let Scripture interpret Scripture.

10. Ask for God's wisdom to discern the spiritual meaning of each sign that accompanied the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The sound of violent rushing wind (verse 2) – John 3:8; Ezekiel 37:5-6

The tongues of fire (verse 3) – Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16

Miraculous speech (verse 4) – What were the “other tongues” that the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak (Acts 2:4, 6 and 11)?

The powerful manifestations of wind and fire are often images of God's presence in the Bible. (See Exodus 3:2-5; 13:21-22; 19:18; 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:11-14; Ezekiel 13:13 and John 3:8.) Thus, the wind and fire at Pentecost point to a Theophany—a term used for any visible or audible manifestation of God. What this means is that God was personally and powerfully present on that first New Testament Pentecost, directing His mission!

Note: Ever since the time of the early church fathers, commentators have seen the blessing of Pentecost as a deliberate and dramatic reversal of the curse of Babel. (**Read** Genesis 11:1-9.) Languages that once confused and alienated people were now employed to proclaim the good news that God's salvation had come to the nations. People once divided through sin would now be united in the Savior. Out of chaos and cacophony God created a beautiful diversity and harmony, that people of all languages might come together as a choir of praise to the glory of God!

Reflection: Spend a few minutes pondering the remarkable qualities of God displayed in the inspiring scene in Acts 2:2-11.

11. How has your conception of God been stretched through what you have seen and heard in this passage? What difference will this make in the way you live out your everyday life?

12. Describe a time when you personally experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in your life or your church community.

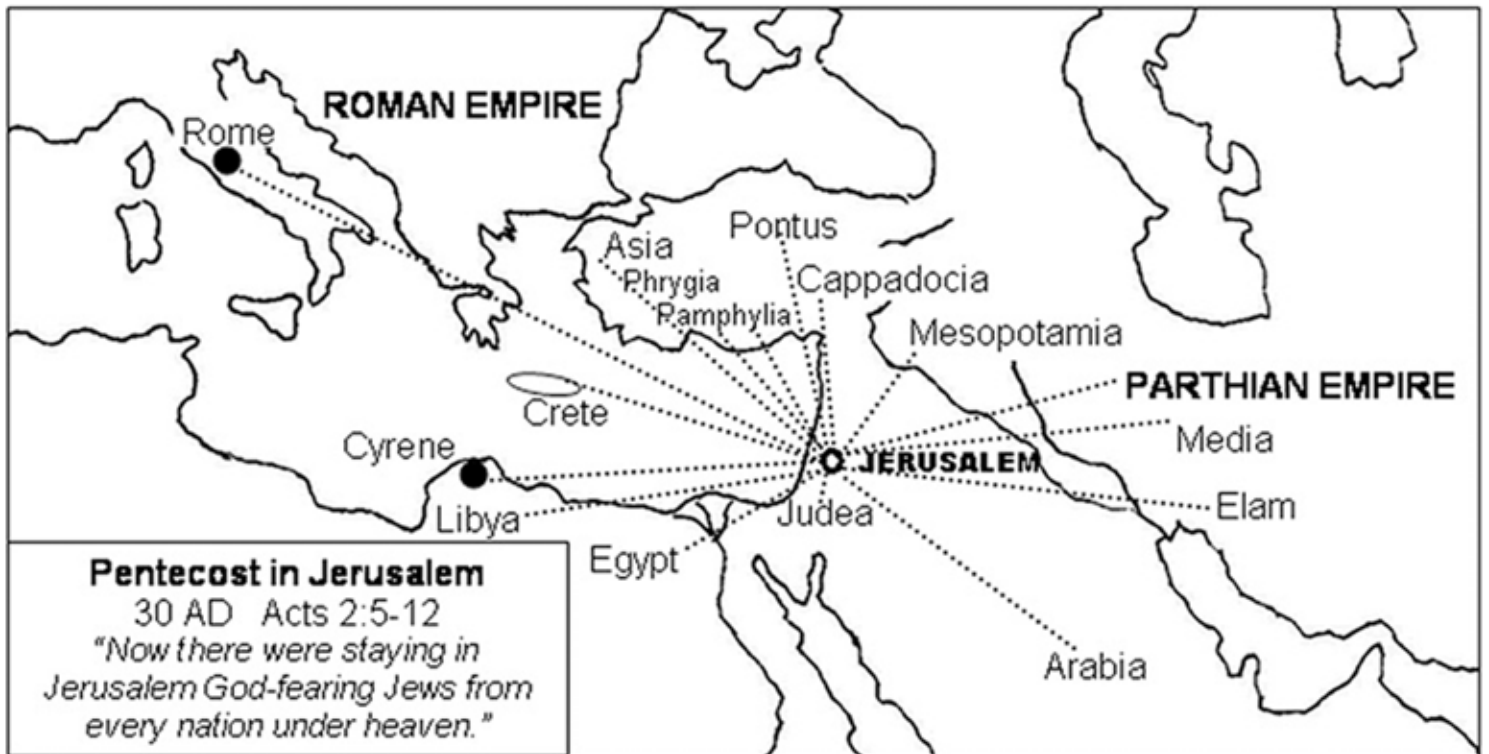
Stop and Think: If we properly understand this great historic event our hearts will be enflamed with the mission of taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

13. Ponder this statement and evaluate your current commitment to Jesus' words in Acts 1:8. Spend some time praying about how God might be calling you to be His *witness*. Record your thoughts here.

Praise God for the provision that He has made for you to be His witness! Ask Him to empower you for that task!

Throughout the book of Acts we will learn much about the workings of the Holy Spirit through His body, the church. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon certain individuals and empowered them for specific tasks. But on the Day of Pentecost He came to indwell every believer permanently. At the moment one accepts Jesus Christ as Savior that person is indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14).

14. Have you had a life changing encounter with the God of the Bible? *If so, briefly relate your conversion story. Include areas in which God has brought supernatural changes to your life.* If you still have questions and are not sure what a personal relationship with God means, write your questions here. Please take time to speak to your leader after the lesson.



Map 2