

## The Commencement of the Church – Part I

### The Coming of the Holy Spirit

(Acts 2:1-13)

#### Introduction:

1. The coming of the Holy Spirit was what the apostles and other followers of Christ had anticipated would happen.
  - I am not sure they fully grasped the meaning of it all for this was something new to even the “religious community”.
    - 1) The apostles often struggled with concepts concerning the kingdom as well as the claims by Christ that He was to be killed; so it is highly possible that although they knew the Holy Spirit would come, the actual realization of what that meant would come over time.
    - 2) Later in this text we will see that the “religious leaders” and the other witnesses to the “speaking in different known languages” by the apostles was perplexing and played off as them being drunk with too much wine.
  - Although we are able to read of the various “Acts of the Holy Spirit” through the Apostles; in many ways we don’t even fully grasp the significant impact of this “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” on the Day of Pentecost nearly 2000 years ago.
    - 1) On one hand we have some churches that over emphasis the supernatural workings attributed to the Holy Spirit.....so much so that it becomes mystical.

- 2) On the other hand some churches completely ignore or deny the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.
  - 3) As we look at this text you will see that the interpretation of what this “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” actually means continues to be a source of debate between these different factions and or extremes.
2. The key to understanding what transpires in Acts 2 is to leave behind our personal biases and denominational influences and try to mentally place ourselves in the position of the apostles and early followers of Christ (the 120 or so).
- Jesus once walked with them, He taught them, lived among them, was their friend, He was God in the flesh who dwelt among them, and went to the cross and died for them.
    - 1) He taught them on what the “Kingdom of God” was and He taught them how to live as citizens of that Kingdom.
    - 2) He gave them clear direction and clear marching orders in which He commissioned them to be His messengers (Apostles) of the Gospel (Good news – that Jesus Saves).
    - 3) He prepared them for His death, resurrection, ascension and coming of the Holy Spirit. (John 14-16)
  - The Apostles and other disciples believed this and that is why they gathered themselves together in Jerusalem as Jesus commanded them to. They were of one accord and waiting with anticipation for what was promised – the “Coming of the Holy Spirit”.
  - It will be this “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” that will launch or commence a totally new entity known as the Church – the “called out ones”. A mystery to the prophets but a reality to those called Christian.

## **The Events Surrounding the Spirit's Coming (Acts 2:1)**

1. We are told they were gathered together on the “day of Pentecost”
  - What was the day of Pentecost all about?
    - 1) Pentecost means “fiftieth” and is the New Testament name for the Jewish celebration of the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22-23) or Harvest (Exodus 23:16).
    - 2) Basically it was the fiftieth day after Passover which was in conjunction with 50 days after the celebration of the “Firstfruits feast” (Leviticus 23:16), and in post exilic Judaism it was a time to celebrate the giving of the Law to Moses.
  - Why have the Spirit come on the Day of Pentecost? (II Corinthians 5:5, Ephesians 1:13-14)
2. We are also told that they all together, with one accord, in one place (NKJV)
  - The key component here (in my opinion) is that they were unified in what they were doing.
  - This was a “sovereignly designed event” for the intended purpose of the Holy Spirit descending on each one. (Acts 2:3)

### **The Evidence Surrounding the Sprit's Coming (Acts 2:2-4)**

*(Title taken from John MacArthur's Commentary on Acts page 39)*

1. Take note of the phrase; “**suddenly** there came a noise....”, which seems to indicate an element of surprise.
  - The disciples knew the Holy Spirit would come but they didn't know when.
  - It will be the same when Jesus returns.....it will be as a thief in the night. (I Thessalonians 5:2, Matthew 24:44)
2. What transpired was a “supernatural” act and not some explainable weather phenomenon.
  - Luke gives us an audible picture as he describes the sound as something “**like**” a violent rushing wind
    - 1) The words for **wind** and **spirit** are one in the same in the Hebrew and Greek in that both could simply mean to breathe or to blow.
    - 2) Thus the fullness of the Holy Spirit's coming is described as being “breathed into” those in the room.
    - 3) We are told that it (the wind) filled the whole house where they were sitting. “This points to the power of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of His coming”. (**The Bible Knowledge Commentary; Volume 2 page 357**)
  - Next Luke provides a visual picture by describing what appeared to be “tongues **as of** fire”.
    - 1) Let's take a look at some passages where God displays Himself in the form of flames and describe how this portrays the presence of God (Genesis 15:17, Exodus 3:2-6, 13:21-22, 19:18, 40:38):

- 2) It is also important to note that this display of power (evidenced by fire) was precisely what was expected. (Matthew 3:11, Luke 3:16)
3. No believer in that room was exempt from this experience for the Scriptures tell us; “and there appeared to them **divided tongues**, as it were of fire, **it sat also upon each one of them**”. (Young’s Literal Translation)
  - There is no reason to conclude anything other than it happened in a moment, and to each one in a simultaneous manner.
  - It was a uniform and sovereign work of God that occurred to all in the room that day. There was no indication that this was sought out privately or in an individual manner.
  - Our conclusions are that all that day were made into “**one spiritual body**” which is the **body of Christ – The Church**.
4. A widely held view (one of which I support) is that this event; “The Coming of the Holy Spirit” in which He rested upon (filled) each person in the room that day, was marked by this external evidence of speaking in other tongues (other known languages).
  - Such was an external supernatural occurrence that was evidenced by an internal manifestation of the Holy Spirit.
    - 1) Note that it only occurred only to believers (followers of Christ) which is evidenced by the fact that some (those who do not believe) not being able to speak in these “other tongues”.
    - 2) Note also that it occurred to all which leads many to conclude (of which I personally agree) that this event marked the beginning of the church.....something anticipated by followers of Christ (Matthew 16:18), but up to this point not fully realized.

- This “Spirit baptism” as described more fully in Acts 11:15-16, I Corinthians 12:13, Romans 6:3, Colossians 2:12 and other passages first occurred at Pentecost which seems to mark the commencement of the church as evidenced by the outward supernatural occurrence resulting from an internal manifestation of the Spirit.
  - 1) Since Acts is somewhat of a transitional book it stands to reason that a point needs to be made that the promise of the Holy Spirit had come, which was evidenced by this supernatural occurrence.
  - 2) We learn from later passages of Scripture that the Spirit’s Baptism occurs once for each believer at the moment of salvation (see texts above) and we’ll also see through our study of Acts that the outward manifestation of that is seen through the obedient life of the follower of Christ (Christian).
  - 3) There will be instances throughout Acts, the New Testament and even throughout the Church age where one is urged to be continually “filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), but this is best understood as pursuing the righteous life of a believer in which that person actively seeks God’s will, confesses sin, and saturates their mind with God’s Word, among other righteous pursuits. It is a life that “walks by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16)

5. Since “speaking with other tongues” was the outward manifestation or supernatural occurrence.....then what actually occurred?
- The clear definition of the phrase “other tongues” (NKJV) is defined for us as other known languages.
    - 1) The context that follows (Acts 2:5-13) supports the fact that what was happening was Galileans were speaking yet other people understood them in their own language or tongue.
    - 2) There is no evidence in this text that this was a heavenly or mystical language. It was words spoken by a group of Galileans and yet was understood by several different people groups in their own individual language.
  - The key point that needs to be made here is that the Holy Spirit was in total control of this situation for they (these disciples) spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 1:4)
  - It is important to note that this event (Acts 2:1-13) of “speaking in tongues” should not be confused with other passages in which either similar instances occurred, or where the Apostles taught about their meaning and purpose (i.e. I Corinthians 12-14).
    - 1) It seems to me that the gift of languages (tongues) saw its purposes fulfilled (I Corinthians 13:8) and thus they ceased.
    - 2) Speaking in tongues was non existent from the close of the apostolic age until the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century except in groups that were considered heretical by Orthodox Christianity.
  - The key thing here is to note that this supernatural occurrence of speaking in languages had a significant effect on those who were unbelievers.

### **The “Effect” Surrounding the Spirit’s Coming (Acts 2:5-13)**

*(Title taken from John MacArthur’s Commentary on Acts page 43)*

1. It would have been normal for Jews to live in Jerusalem
  - This was still their home even though many had been dispersed throughout the known world. (See James 1:1, I Peter 1:1)
  - It would have been the custom of the Jews who live in Jerusalem as well as those who would return to Jerusalem to celebrate the various “feasts” of the Jewish calendar.
    - 1) Some would come from afar to participate in these feasts and in so doing it revealed the seriousness of their devotion.....thus the rendering; “devout men from every nation under heaven”.
    - 2) Due to the Diaspora (dispersion) many Jews took on customs and language of the regions in which they lived.
2. Pentecost would have been one of three major feasts celebrated by most Jews and done in the city of Jerusalem.
  - Thus this feast would have drawn a larger than normal crowd
  - At this feast we are told that the crowd became bewildered.....what were they confused about?



- Here is a list of the various languages or people groups who witnessed this unusual event:
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_: who lived in what is now modern day Iran and remained enemies of the Roman Empire as they were never formally conquered by them.
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_: once a part of the great Medo-Persian Empire and now a part of the Parthian Empire.
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_; who lived in modern day southwestern Iran and also a part of the larger Parthian Empire.
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_; which are remnants of the former Babylonian Empire and is now called Iraq. Many Jews were in this region around the time of the Apostles.
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_; is probably best understood as the territory of what was once the overall United Kingdom of Israel.
  - 6) Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia are all the regions of Asia Minor and contained a large Jewish population.
  - 7) \_\_\_\_\_, and the territory of \_\_\_\_\_; which was also home to a large Jewish population as well.
  - 8) There were also Jews residing in Rome, as well as Gentile proselytes, Cretans, and Arab Jews from the area south of Damascus.
- This would have been quite a mixture of people quite a span of language.

3. What was the content of what was spoken by these apostles and other followers of Christ? (Acts 2:11)
  - Don't miss the climax or purpose of why this all took place – it was to reveal the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ!
  - In the verses that follow (Acts 2:14-40) Peter will deliver a sermon that details precisely why Jesus came to earth and many of these various people groups who gather at the Feast of Pentecost will be his audience.
4. As so often is the case; when the Gospel is presented there will be some who accept the message and others who reject it. (Acts 2:12-13)
  - We are told that some continue to listed in amazement wand with “great perplexity”
  - We are told also that others mocked their words, didn't take them serious and concluded they were not in their right frame of mind.
  - I love what John MacArthur says; “No amount of opposition could stop the work of God that began at Pentecost”.

**Stay tuned as we will soon see Peter declaring these words; “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified!” (Acts 2:36)**

**Later Peter will also declare these words; “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)**