Acts 2:1-21

**The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost**

Key verses Acts 2:3-4 “3They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

In last week’s message, Jesus told his disciples, “Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:5).” “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)” After saying these words, Jesus ascended to heaven. Though the disciples were left behind like orphans in this world, they returned and joined together constantly in prayer, waiting for the Holy Spirit.

Look at verse 1. “**When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place**.” Here, Pentecost means the 50th: 50 days from the day Jesus rose or seven full weeks after the Sabbath in the week of Passover. The original name of Pentecost in the Old Testament was the Feast of Weeks. The Feast of Weeks celebrated the harvest, so it is also called the Feast of Harvest (Deut 16:16). God commanded that all men must appear before the Lord three times a year: on the day of Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 16:16). So on Pentecost, Jerusalem would have overly crowded with all the God-fearing Jews visiting from Israel and all over the world as we see in verses 9-11.

Here, let’s review the Old Testament’s Feasts based on Leviticus 23 (Chart#1). The first is Passover which is the 14th day of 1st month. The second is the Feast of First Fruits, which is two days after Passover. The third one is the Feast of Weeks (Feast of Harvest, Pentecost) which is seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath of the Passover. The fourth is the Feast of Trumpets which is the first day of the seventh month. The fifth is the Day of Atonement which is the 10th day of the seventh month. Lastly, the sixth is the Feast of Tabernacles which is a week from the 15th day of the seventh month. The interesting thing is that Jesus put the milestone of his ministry on the days of feasts. For example, Jesus died as the Lamb of God on Passover and rose again from the dead as the first fruit of resurrection on the day of the Feast of First Fruits. Now on the day of Pentecost, God poured out his Holy Spirit to harvest his people. Jesus finished everything about him except one important thing. What is that? His second coming! Then, what feast remains to be fulfilled by Jesus? The Feast of Trumpets! The Feast of Trumpets celebrates a new year. Jesus promised that he would come back with the sound of a trumpet to gather his chosen people. [1 Thessalonians 4:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%204%3A16&version=NIV) reads, **For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God...”** Matthew 24:30, 31 states that “**30 Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”**

Let’s go back to today’s passage. So, when Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. The author does not identify which place they gathered, whether it was an upstairs room, a temple, or other places, because the place was not important here. The meaningful fact was that they were all together in one place. In other words, they gathered with one mind to worship God, praise God, and love God. This is the beginning of the birth of the early church. The word translated “church” in the Bible is ***ekklesia*** which means “called out ones.” So, a church is not a building but an assembly of the chosen people with the Holy Spirit to worship and serve God. In last week’s passage, the author describes who gathered in the place. Let’s look at Acts 1:14 “**They all joined together constantly in prayer** ***along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers***.” The author emphasizes the inclusion of women, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Jesus’ brothers in the gathering. Here the women indicate the women the author Luke mentioned in Luke 8:2, 3: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household (King Herod Antipas); Susanna; and many others. They all had different backgrounds: some of them were noble, and some of them were laymen, some of them were mother, some them are brothers or sisters. But they were all together in one place because of the love of Jesus. In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus said that if we gather two or three, Jesus will be there. Matthew 18:20 “**20For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”** I believe God loves our church so much! Our church has more diverse people gathered in one place than the early church. We have grandparents and grandchildren, young and old, from Lidia Han to senior missionaries, and different cultural backgrounds. We all have colorful personalities. But we gathered to worship God, praise God, pray to God, and listen to His words in this place. May God bless our church to continue to grow serving God and His people. May God bless our church with his holy presence in and among us!

Look at verses 2-4: “2 **Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them**.” When his people were in one place, suddenly God poured out the Holy Spirit powerfully. The author describes the three supernatural phenomena that sensibly and recognizably occurred when the Holy Spirit fell upon them. The first was a supernatural audible event. They were able to discern the sound like the blowing of a violent wind from heaven which filled the whole house. The second was a supernatural visible phenomenon in that they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire come upon them. Even as the fire fell upon each head, the fire did not consume them. The third was supernatural power that each person was able to speak in other tongues, even if they had never learned these languages before. What a wonderful gift we wish to get! The presence of the Holy Spirit was manifested in a fascinating way. Now we may ask, can we recognize the advent of the Holy Spirit today as the disciples experienced in this chapter? Most likely not. Since the Holy Spirit is a spirit, we cannot touch, smell, see, or hear with our physical senses except for some unique cases. I think God made this event an extraordinary recognizable way because the coming of the Holy Spirit was one of the most significant events in His redemptive history.

What does the advent of the Holy Spirit have momentous meaning? The coming of the Holy Spirit proves the unshakable truthfulness of our salvation through Jesus Christ. During the Last Supper, Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit. He said that it would be good for the disciples if he went away. If he went to the Father, Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to the disciples. If Jesus had not gone to the Father, the Holy Spirit would not have come to us. Jesus said in John 16:7, “**But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you** (John 16:7).” At that time, the disciples would hardly know about the Holy Spirit. But Jesus kept teaching about the Holy Spirit to the disciples and made them wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the Holy Spirit came down in an explicitly recognizable way, as Jesus had told his disciples. It means that Jesus did go to God the Father in heaven and Jesus has sat at the right hand of God as he prophesized (Matthew 26:64). This means Jesus had not died for his own sin but died to forgive our sins as the Lamb of God and resurrected from the dead by the power of God according to the Scriptures. Otherwise, If Jesus died for his own sin, just like other human beings, Jesus would not have gone to the Father in heaven, and God the Father would not have sent us the Holy Spirit. Now the Holy Spirit came down, which means all our sins are forgiven by the blood of Jesus on the cross. Our heavenly Father endorsed the way of salvation through Jesus Christ by sending out the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the coming of the Holy Spirit is God’s seal of our salvation for the day of our redemption. Ephesians 1:13 states, **“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Ephes. 1: 13).** Thus, we should not look out for other ways of salvation. Jesus is the salvation God accepted and confirmed through the Holy Spirit. Act 4:12 states, “**Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved** (Act 4:12).”

Look at verses 2 to 4 again. “2 **Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them**.”

The author describes the Holy Spirit using two metaphors: a violent wind and tongues of fire. Though the Holy Spirit is not wind or fire, the Holy Spirit exhibits characteristics of wind and fire. The word “spirit” translates “ruach” in Hebrew and “pneuma” in Greek. Both “ruach” and “pneuma” means breath, wind, and spirit. “Breath,” “wind,” and “Spirit” are deeply interrelated in the bible. In Genesis 1:2 states, “**the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”** Here,“Spirit” is ruach. Also, Jesus also explained the work of the Holy Spirit using wind in John 3:8 “**8The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit**.”

Wind plays a very essential role in the global eco-system. Let’s think about one example: oceans. Winds create waves and currents in the ocean and put air in the water, which enables plankton to live in water that makes other fish or creatures thrive in them (pictures #1, #2, #3). If there is no wind in the ocean, what would happen? Then no waves and no currents occur, and enough air could not get into the water. Thus only limited creatures would be able to live there. What is worse is that since there are no waves and no currents are created, the water is stagnant. If the water stays still, you may think of a peaceful or calm ocean. But actually, in this scenario, all the seaweeds and debris would be stuck in the stagnant area. The Sargasso Sea in the Atlantic Ocean is a good example. The location of the sea is near the Bermuda Triangle (picture #4). That sea has almost no wind, so it is called a calm wind zone. What happens is that all the floating seaweeds gather in the sea (pictures #5, 6, 7). Other examples are in the Pacific Ocean. There are two calm wind zones in the Pacific Ocean (Picture #8). They called the Great Garbage Patch (Pictures #8, #9).

The human heart and mind are like oceans. Though our physical body is like tiny sand compared to the size of oceans, our heart, our mind, soul is so big, deep, and immeasurable. Who can fathom the depth of our souls and the length of our minds except God alone? As the ocean needs wind, so does our hearts. Our heart needs the wind: wind from heaven, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must flow over our hearts and make them move, alive, thrive, and be filled with the good fruits of life. If we close our hearts to Jesus and block the coming of the Holy Spirit, what would happen? We seem to enjoy peacefulness and calmness within ourselves for a while. In fact, our heart becomes like a stagnant ocean without the presence of the Spirit. Soon the stagnant mind will be filled with all the debris and trash from the world. And the filth will not get out by themselves because of the absence of wind, just like the Sargasso Sea and the great garbage patch in the Pacific Ocean. Eventually, the trapped garbage pollutes and intoxicates the heart and soul and eventually destroys us. In the Gospel of Mathew, Jesus explains what would happen if we do not let the Holy Spirit come in us. One unclean spirit has gone out of a person. Now the person’s heart is unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Maybe the person would make a decision to live well, making a plan and cleaning for himself. But the evil spirit recognized that the heart was unoccupied and brought seven other spirits more evil than itself, and possessed the person. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.

Without the presence of the Holy Spirit, our empty heart sucks all the floating garbage of the world like a black hole. This is called the spiritual law of gravity. Therefore, we should let the Holy Spirit come into our hearts and let him reign in us. Then how can the Holy Spirit come into our hearts? Accept Jesus and wash our sin. Jesus already sacrificed his life to forgive our sins and grant us the gift of the Holy Spirit. 1 John 1:9 states, “ **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness** (1 John1:9)”.  Jesus is the only way through him we can receive the Holy Spirit. Once we accept the Holy Spirit, we should keep the Holy Spirit flowing in us. St. Paul commanded us, “Do not quench the Spirit (1 Theses 5:19),” and “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Ephe 4:30)”. Once we believe in Jesus, we cannot separate ourselves from the Holy Spirit. We need to be aware of his presence in our hearts. How many times did we forget that the Holy Spirit is within us? Also, St Paul commanded us, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:25). May the Lord help us grow in walking by the spirit every day.

The other metaphor of the Holy Spirit is fire. Our God is holy. Holy is his name. So the Spirit of God is called the Holy Spirit. The holiness of God will never tolerate sin. [Deuteronomy 4:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%204%3A24&version=NIV) states, **“For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.**” When the Holy Spirit descends upon us, the fire of holiness will burn all our sins, the debris, and garbage which filed up in the deepest area of our souls.. But the fire would not burn our soul and body just like the burning bush. The presence of the Holy Spirit will sanctify us just like a fire of a furnace refines gold. As a result, we will hate our sins and be born again.

Look at verse 6. **4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them**.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit fell upon not only the twelve disciples but all of them. And the Holy Spirit gave them the power to speak in other tongues. The crowd heard the disciples speak in their own language, and they were bewildered because each one heard their language being spoken. Look at verses 7-11. “**Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!**” Look at the map (World Map#11).  The map shows where the various languages were spoken. The author names all the languages being spoken in the vast region one by one to highlight that not a few but as many languages as possible were spoken. This shows that God wants all the people on earth to hear the gospel of Jesus. In response to the speaking tongues, the people asked one another in amazement, “What does this mean?” Some, however, made fun of them, saying, “They have had too much wine.”

Hearing these arguments, Peter stood up and explained the meaning of this incident. If Peter had not stood up and explained, some would have thought that they saw a group of drunkards in the morning and would have forgotten them. Others would have thought that they saw miracles in Jerusalem and soon forget them too. Peter explained the meaning of this incident on the basis of the Scriptures. First of all, it was nine o’clock, so the disciples would not be drunk. In New York, we may find a drunken man in the street at 9 am. But at that time, in Jerusalem, where religious activities were held, it would be impossible to find a drunken man. Peter declared that that incident fulfilled the word of God spoken by the prophet Joel. Let’s look at verses 17-18. “**17In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.18Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”** Here, the last days refer to the period between Jesus’ first coming and second coming. We live in the last days. One of the most significant characteristics in the last days is that God pours out his Spirit on all people regardless of their backgrounds: American, Latin American, African, Asian, Middle Eastern, or European. God will pour out his Spirit into whoever believes in Jesus. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit fell on people selectively and transiently. God sent his Spirit to kings, prophets, priests, or other special people who were going to carry out his mission: King Saul and David, Prophet Samuel, and Priest Zechariah, Joseph in Genesis, Daniel, Gideon, and Samson as such. But after Jesus ascended to Father, the Holy Spirit is open to all people who believe in Jesus. Also, verse 17 says, “In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all the people.” Here, God uses the word “pour out” to give us the Holy Spirit. “Pour out” implies that God will give the Holy Spirit without reserve and to the fullness. Jesus used the same word at the Last Supper. “Drink it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mathew 24:27b).” Jesus eagerly desired to pour out his blood to save us. Likewise, Jesus eagerly desires to pour out the Holy Spirit on us. Therefore if you have not received the Holy Spirit, I would ask you to first think about what year you were born. If you were born Before Christ, you may be normal. No problem. But if your birth year starts with 19XX, 20XX, then you have a big problem. God has been ready to pour out the Holy Spirit to us, but you did not accept him yet. If we accept Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will enable us to prophesy God’s words, have visions and dreams regardless of your age or your situation. Above all, he will enable us to know more about Jesus and to be witnesses of Jesus Christ for our generation.

Verses 19 and 20 talk about the celestial disasters when Jesus’ second coming. At that time, the sun will not shine its light and radiate its energy, and the universal order will collapse. But, the door to salvation will be still widely open to everyone. Whoever believes and calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

In conclusion, the Holy Spirit has come down on everyone who believes in Jesus. The coming of the Holy Spirit confirms that the death of Jesus on the cross is for the atonement of our sins. The Holy Spirit is our soul mate to have a fruitful life in Christ. The Holy Spirit and our soul are inseparable. May God richly bless us to be filled with the Holy Spirit and walk with him every day!

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