



We Have Power From Heaven

Acts 2:1-13

BETTER

Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 407–409.

Acts 2:1–13 (NKJV)

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"

9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretans and Arabs—**we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.**”

12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”

13 Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”

- We are not going to change this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by the fire within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God.”
- Vance Havner made that statement and he was right. The early church had none of the things that we think are so essential for success today—buildings, money, political influence, social status—and yet the church won multitudes to Christ and saw many churches established throughout the Roman world.

- Why? Because the church had the power of the Holy Spirit energizing its ministry. They were a people who “were ignited by the Spirit of God.”

- That same Holy Spirit power is available to us today to make us more effective witnesses for Christ. The better we understand His working at Pentecost, the better we will be able to relate to Him and experience His power.
- The ministry of the Spirit is to glorify Christ in the life and witness of the believer, and that is what is important.

John 16:14 (NKJV)

He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

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Acts 2 helps us understand the Holy Spirit by recording four experiences in the life of the church.

- The Church Waiting for the Spirit (*Acts 2:1*)
- The Church Worshiping the Lord (*Acts 2:2–13*)
- The Church Witnessing to the Lost (*Acts 2:14–41*)
- The Church Walking in the Spirit (*Acts 2:42–47*)

Acts 2:1 (NKJV)

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

The Church Waiting for the Spirit

Acts 2:1

- Pentecost means “fiftieth” because this feast was held fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits (*Lev. 23:15–22*).
- The calendar of Jewish feasts in Leviticus 23 is an outline of the work of Jesus Christ.
- Passover pictures His death as the Lamb of God (*John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7*), and the Feast of Firstfruits pictures His resurrection from the dead (*1 Cor. 15:20–23*).

The Church Waiting for the Spirit

Acts 2:1

- Fifty days after Firstfruits is the Feast of Pentecost, which pictures the formation of the church.
- At Pentecost, the Jews celebrated the giving of the Law, but Christians celebrate it because of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the church.

- The Feast of Firstfruits took place on the day after the Sabbath following Passover, which means it was always on the first day of the week.
- (The Sabbath is the seventh day.) Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week and “became the firstfruits of them that slept” (*1 Cor. 15:20*).
- Now, if Pentecost was fifty days later—seven weeks plus one day—then Pentecost also took place on the first day of the week.

- Christians assemble and worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, because on that day our Lord arose from the dead, but it was also the day on which the Holy Spirit was given to the church.
- On the Feast of Firstfruits, the priest waved a sheaf of grain before the Lord; but on Pentecost, he presented two loaves of bread. Why? Because at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit baptized the believers and united them into one body.

- The Jewish believers received this baptism at Pentecost, and the Gentile believers in the home of Cornelius (*Acts 10*).
- This explains the presence of two loaves of bread (*see 1 Cor. 10:17*).
- The fact that there was leaven (yeast) in the loaves indicates the presence of sin in the church on earth.
- The church will not be perfect until it gets to heaven.

- We must not conclude that this ten-day prayer meeting brought about the miracles of Pentecost, or that we today may pray as they did and experience “another Pentecost.”
- Like our Lord’s death at Calvary, Pentecost was a once-for-all event that will not be repeated.
- The church may experience new fillings of the Spirit, and certainly patient prayer is an essential element to spiritual power, but we would not ask for another Pentecost any more than we would ask for another Calvary.

The Church Worshiping the Lord

Acts 2:2–13

- As we study the events of Pentecost, it is important that we separate the accidentals from the essentials.
- The Spirit *came* and the people heard the sound of rushing wind and saw tongues of fire.

The Church Worshiping the Lord

Acts 2:2–13

- The Spirit *baptized* and *filled* the believers, and then *spoke* as they praised God in various languages.
- The Spirit *empowered* Peter to preach, and then He *convicted* the listeners so that 3,000 of them trusted Christ and were saved.
- Let's consider these ministries one by one.

The Spirit Came

vv. 2–3

The Holy Spirit had been active prior to Pentecost and had worked in Creation (*Gen. 1:1–2*), in Old Testament history (*Jud. 6:34; 1 Sam. 16:13*), and in the life and ministry of Jesus (*Luke 1:30–37; 4:1, 14; Acts 10:38*).

1.

However, now there would be two changes: the Spirit would dwell in people and not just come on them, and His presence would be permanent, not temporary.

John 14:16–17 (NKJV)

16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

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2.

The Spirit could not have come sooner, for it was essential that Jesus die, be raised from the dead, and return to heaven before the Spirit could be given. Remember the Jewish calendar in Leviticus 23: Passover, Firstfruits, and then Pentecost.

John 7:37–39 (NKJV)

37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

There Were Three Startling Signs That Accompanied The Coming Of The Spirit

- The sound of a rushing wind, tongues of fire, and the believers praising God in various languages.
- The word *Spirit* is the same as “wind” in both the Hebrew and the Greek (*John 3:8*).
- The people did not *feel* the wind; they heard *the sound* of a mighty wind. It is likely the believers were in the temple when this occurred (*Luke 24:53*).

- The word house in Acts 2:2 can refer to the temple (*see Acts 7:47*).
- The tongues of fire symbolized the powerful witness of the church to the people.
- Campbell Morgan reminds us that our tongues can be set on fire either by heaven or by hell!

James 3:5–6 (NKJV)

5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

- **Combine wind and fire and you have—a blaze!**

The Spirit Baptized

vv. 1:5

- The Greek word *baptizo* has two meanings:
- One literal and the other figurative.
- The word literally means “to submerge,” but the figurative meaning is “to be identified with.”
- The baptism of the Spirit is that act of God by which He identified believers with the exalted Head of the church, Jesus Christ, and formed the spiritual body of Christ on earth (*1 Cor. 12:12–14*).

1 Corinthians 12:12–14 (NKJV)

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

- Historically, this took place at Pentecost; today, it takes place whenever a sinner trusts Jesus Christ and is born again.
- When you read about “baptism” in the New Testament, you must exercise discernment to determine whether the word is to be interpreted literally or symbolically.

- For example, in Romans 6:3–4 and Galatians 3:27–28, the reference is symbolic since water baptism cannot put a sinner into Jesus Christ.
- Only the Holy Spirit can do that (*Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 10:44–48*). Water baptism is a public witness of the person's identification with Jesus Christ, while Spirit baptism is the personal and private experience that identifies the person with Christ.
- It is important to note that historically, the baptism of the Spirit took place in two stages: the Jewish believers were baptized at Pentecost, and the Gentiles were baptized and added to the body in the home of Cornelius (*Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–17; and see Eph. 2:11–22*).

The Spirit Filled v. 4

- The filling of the Spirit has to do with power for witness and service (*Acts 1:8*).
- We are not exhorted to be baptized by the Spirit, for this is something God does once and for all when we trust His Son.

- We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (*Eph. 5:18*), for we need His power constantly if we are to serve God effectively.

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV)

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

- At Pentecost, the Christians were filled with the Spirit and experienced the baptism of the Spirit; but after that, they experienced many fillings (*Acts 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9*) but no more baptisms.

- The Holy Spirit has revealed God's truth to us in *words*, and these words have definite meanings that must not be changed.

1 Corinthians 2:12–13 (NKJV)

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

- Regeneration must not be confused with justification, nor propitiation with adoption. Each of these words baptism and filling is important in God's plan of salvation and must be defined accurately and used carefully.

- The baptism of the Spirit means that I belong to His body; the fullness of the Spirit means that my body belongs to Him.
- The baptism is final; the fullness is repeated as we trust God for new power to witness.
- The baptism involves all other believers, for it makes us one in the body of Christ (*Eph. 4:1–6*); while the fullness is personal and individual.
- These are two distinct experiences and they must not be confused.

The Spirit Spoke

vv. 5–13

- Note that the believers were praising God, not preaching the Gospel, and that they used known languages, not an “unknown tongue” (*Acts 2:6-8*).
- Luke named fifteen different geographical locations and clearly stated that the citizens of those places heard Peter and the others declare God’s wonderful works *in languages they could understand*.

The Spirit Spoke vv. 5–13

- The Greek word translated “language” in Acts 2:6 and “tongue” in Acts 2:8 is *dialektos* and refers to a language or dialect of some country or district (*Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14*).

- Why did God do this? For one thing, Pentecost was a reversal of the judgment at the Tower of Babel when God confused man's language (*Gen. 11:1–9*).
- God's judgment at Babel scattered the people, but God's blessing at Pentecost united the believers in the Spirit.
- At Babel, the people were unable to understand each other; but at Pentecost, men heard God's praises and understood what was said.

- The Tower of Babel was a scheme designed to praise men and make a name for men, but Pentecost brought praise to God.
- The building of Babel was an act of rebellion, but Pentecost was a ministry of humble submission to God. What a contrast!

- Another reason for this gift of tongues was to let the people know that the Gospel was for the whole world.
- God wants to speak to every person in his or her own language and give the saving message of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- The emphasis in the Book of Acts is on worldwide evangelization, “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (*Acts 1:8*).
- “The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions,” said Henry Martyn, “and the nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we must become.”

- Apparently the sound of the wind drew the people to the temple where the believers were gathered, but it was the praise by the believers that really captured their attention.
- The careless listeners mocked and accused the believers of being drunk, but others were sincerely concerned to find out what was going on.
- The people were perplexed (*Acts 2:6*), amazed (*Acts 2:7, 12*), and they marveled (*Acts 2:7*).

- It is interesting that the mockers should accuse the believers of being drunk, for wine is associated with the Holy Spirit (*Eph. 5:18*).
- Paul relates the two *in contrast*, for when a man is filled with strong drink, he loses control of himself and ends up being ashamed; but when a person is filled with the Spirit, he has self-control and glorifies God.
- Strong drink can bring a temporary exhilaration, but the Spirit gives a deep satisfaction and a lasting joy.

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