

1. What you think John meant when he said that Jesus would baptize with “The Holy Spirit and fire?”
2. How does the Spirit purify and refine us?
3. What is significant about the fact that tongues of fire “separated and came to rest on each them?”

THE GATHERING OF THE NATIONS (Verses 5-12)

We have already looked at God’s New Covenant Promise to renew our hearts and place his Spirit in us. The first thing God promises is to gather his people who have been scattered to every nation under heaven. ‘I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land (Ezekiel 36:24).’

In Genesis 11, God judges the nations and scatters them to the four corners of the earth by confusing their language. In the Old Testament, God judges his people by giving them over to their captors who spoke in strange tongues and forced them to live in distant lands. In Acts 2, God gathers his people and transcends the barrier of language.

VERSES 5-12 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ 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, ¹⁰ 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!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

1. How does the gathering of God fearing Jews from “every nation under heaven” to hear the gospel foreshadow the gospel going into all the world (Acts 1:8), and the scene in Revelation where a great multitude “from every nation, tribe, people and language (Revelation 7:9) is assembled before the throne of God?
2. How does God feel about the nations?
3. How can we practically live out God’s love for the nations?

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2018

360 DISCUSSION GUIDE



Few events in Scripture are as dramatic or profound as the events Luke narrates for us in the 2nd Chapter of Acts.

Before returning to heaven, Jesus instructed 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 1:4-5).”

I am not sure what the disciples expected but the Father, as the Father is prone to do, fulfills his promise in dramatic fashion. There was a sound like the sound of a violent wind. There were what appeared to be tongues of flame that separated and settled on everyone present, and a handful of inarticulate Galileans, without the aid of Rosetta Stone or years of intensive speech therapy, were able to speak in languages and dialects they could never have possibly mastered on their own.

The crowds who were drawn into the experience asked the question we should all be asking, “What does this mean?”

Few passages are as rich in biblical imagery.

THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT (Acts 1:4-5, 8)

In the Old Testament God had dramatically delivered his people, made his dwelling among them, and revealed his heart and character to them in the Law. Yet, in spite of his faithfulness to them, they always struggled to be faithful to him. The problem was never with the Law, the problem was with the human heart. So God promised that he would one day do a work in the heart that would enable his people to be and do everything he had called them to be and do. This is the promise that is at the very heart of the events that are recorded in Acts 2.

ACTS 1:8 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."

EZEKIEL 36:24-27 "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

1. How is Jesus' promise in Acts 1, a fulfillment of the promises God made Ezekiel 36?
2. According to Ezekiel 36, what will the Spirit enable us to do?
3. According to Acts 1:8, what will the Spirit enable us to do?
4. How do the two complement and complete each other?

THE CELEBRATION OF PENTECOST (Verse 1)

While Luke only makes a passing reference to Pentecost, there are some interesting links between the Old Testament celebration of Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit.

"Pentecost" means 50. The festival of "Pentecost" occurred fifty days after Passover. It was more commonly referred to as the "Festival of Weeks" or "Firstfruits." It marked the completion of the wheat harvest and the celebration of God's gracious provision by offering the "firstfruits" of the harvest back to him. Paul would later refer to the Spirit as God's "firstfruits" offering to us.

VERSE 1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

ROMANS 8:23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

1. How does the coming of the Holy Spirit fulfill the imagery of "firstfruits?"
2. What do you make of the fact that in the traditional celebration of Pentecost the worshiper honors God with the "firstfruits" of the harvest, but in its fulfillment, God honors the worshiper with the "firstfruits of the Spirit?"
3. "Firstfruits" were always given in the expectation of the harvest yet to come, what are some of the blessings that are yet to come to those who have received the "firstfruits of the Spirit?"

THE BREATH OF GOD (Verse 2)

In the languages of both the Old and New Testament the word for "wind" can also be translated as "breath" or "spirit." Biblical writers are fascinated by the word play. Humanity comes into being when God breathes the breath of life into our nostrils (Gen. 2:7). In Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, God breathes new spiritual life into the nation of Israel (Ez. 37:9). In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus he compares the Holy Spirit to wind (Joh. 3:8).

VERSE 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

1. How would you compare and contrast the breath of God in creation with the breath of God in New Creation?
2. How would you describe the life or vitality that the Spirit breathes into his people?

A CONSUMING FIRE (vv. 3-4)

God's presence is often accompanied by fire. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2). He led the nation of Israel as a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21). The mountains smoldered as Moses received the Law for the second time (Ex. 24:17). The prophet Malachi asks, "Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire (Mal. 3:2)." John promised that there would be one who came after him who would baptize us "in the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16).

ACTS 2:3 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.