



First Baptist
MADISON

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

ACTS 2:1-13

SEPTEMBER 19, 2021

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Write the word *revolution* on a board or a large piece of paper in your room. As participants arrive, give them markers and ask them to write words or thoughts related to revolution on the board. Discuss their responses.**

- 2 How do these words and statements apply to the church today?**

- 3 How is revolution in the world different than spiritual revolution?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Read Acts 2:1-4.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 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. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

2:1-2. Throughout this book Luke records the togetherness the early Christians enjoyed. Here, at the beginning of everything, we find them all together. They heard a sound like the blowing of a violent wind, certainly an experience with which all of us can identify. The word for wind is *pneuma*, the same word Jesus used in talking about the Spirit and the wind with Nicodemus (John 3:7-8).

Wind filling the whole house reminds us of God's presence filling the temple in the Old Testament. If you live in the south, the midwest, or parts of Canada, you might imagine a tornado inside the house. East coast and Gulf state people might recognize the experience of a hurricane, but again, inside the house. Luke was probably not present for this event, but we can imagine that he heard his colleagues describe it scores of times, for it was a day they could never forget.

2:3. We need to be careful with the language of the text. The sound was not a wind but like a wind. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire. Apparently, the fire started as one and then separated and came upon them. Like wind, the Bible commonly associates fire with the presence

of God, as Moses found out one day in the desert (Exod. 3:2). Since this entire experience was highly symbolical, it may not be inappropriate for us to see in the single then multiple fire the unity and diversity in the body of Christ.

2:4. A third physical phenomenon experienced on the Day of Pentecost was the use of different languages. Throughout Acts, Luke uses different verbs to describe the coming of the Spirit upon new believers. This first time was a unique event, never again repeated in exactly the same way. When we look at the entire New Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit, we see the word *baptism* associated with initial conversion and the word *filling* with ministry. The first seems to happen once without repetition; the second occurs with frequency as believers allow God's Spirit to produce powerful work through them.

Most evangelical scholars believe the tongues of Pentecost were genuine languages, not the ecstatic sounds Paul dealt with at Corinth (1 Cor. 14:1-12). Two arguments rise strongly to emphasize that these tongues represented languages not previously learned. First, the use of the word *dialek-tos* in verses 6 and 8 can only refer to a language or dialect. Second, the paragraph that follows (vv. 5-12) specifically emphasizes the fact that people of different languages understood the message of the Christians in their own language.

Some argue for a miracle of hearing as well as speaking in this chapter. The text does not really justify that. On the other hand, when people filled with the Holy Spirit proclaim the gospel, a supernatural ministry always takes place. When the hearers respond, a miracle of understanding certainly follows.

- **What were the disciples doing when the Holy Spirit arrived?**

- **What are some reasons the disciples may have been together?**

- **Read John 14:15-18. The coming of the Holy Spirit was a fulfillment of Jesus' promise to the disciples. Why did Jesus send the Holy Spirit?**

> Read Acts 2:5-13.

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?" ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine.

2:5-6. Like Paul, Luke occasionally engages in deliberate exaggeration such as his suggestion that there were pious Jews residing in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. Probably we should understand him to mean that people speaking many other languages were present on the Day of Pentecost and each heard the message in his or her own language or dialect. We might ask, if they resided in Jerusalem, wouldn't they have understood Aramaic, or at least Greek? Doubtless many of them did; but part of the miracle was God's ability to proclaim his message in multiple languages through uneducated people who spoke almost exclusively Aramaic and Greek.

Some have suggested that the Feast of Pentecost might very well have attracted over two hundred thousand Jews from all over Palestine and the Mediterranean world. Nothing indicates that they heard the wind or saw the flames; but the sound of languages—perhaps dozens of them—captured their attention immediately.

2:7-11. The speakers amazed Jerusalem's visitors as much as did the language: "are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" After the introductory question raised by the bewildered guests, they identified fifteen language groups, roughly scattered from east to west, who heard the believers declaring the wonders of God in their own languages. Luke tells us they were bewildered and perplexed. Twice he used the word amazed. Many of the disciples (all of the eleven) came from Galilee, but that label for the group does not necessarily mean that all 120 came from that province. Jesus was a Galilean, and his followers were therefore known by that group name.

Luke's list of fifteen geographical locations was a group of nations or areas in which known Jewish

populations existed and would likely have sent representative groups to the Feast of Pentecost. Everyone there who spoke a language other than Greek or Aramaic heard the message of the Christians in that language—maybe fifteen languages, maybe fifty, maybe more. The languages differed; the message remained the same: the wonders of God.

2:12-13. What a wonderful question to hear after one has proclaimed the wonders of God. Surely every pastor would like to have a congregation ask about every sermon, *What does this mean?* Like most congregations, not everyone agreed that this event had significant meaning. Some simply mocked, they have had too much wine (v. 13). This word for wine (*gleukos*), used only here in the Bible, leaves no doubt of the mockers' meaning. Peter's explanation in the following verses says pointedly, "These men are not drunk, as you suppose (v. 15)." People shocked by a supernatural phenomenon may choose to accept God's hand at work in His world, or they may turn away and chalk it up to something else. When they make the latter choice, drunkenness offers as good an explanation as any.

- **How did the people around the apostles respond to their ministry? Why do you think the people were so shocked?**

- **People looked on what happened with suspicion. What are ways God works today that might cause others to be suspicious? Have you encountered anything like this?**

- **Think back to the introduction where we considered revolution in the world versus revolution through the Spirit. Why did the crowd not see the significance of what was happening? (See 2 Cor. 4:4.)**

- **What is revolutionary about the gospel?**

- **What can you do today to prepare yourself for the world's rejection?**

> Read Philippians 2:5-11.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2:5. Paul proceeds to give examples for the Philippians to emulate. The first is Christ. He is the supreme example of humility, love, and selflessness. Christ's model brings to life Paul's words. As believers are united with Christ, we are to have the same attitude as Christ, one of humility. Paul expresses the same thought in Ephesians 4:2: "*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*" All believers should share this humble, selfless mindset of Christ.

2:6. Jesus is the preeminent example of humility. He has always been God. John 1:1 speaks of Jesus: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" As God, He did not selfishly grasp hold of or tightly hold to His position as equal with God. Instead, He was willing to leave His high position in heaven temporarily and to give Himself over to serving our needs. Although He set aside the rights and privileges of being God, He remained God.

2:7. Jesus made Himself nothing or "emptied Himself." Scholars refer to this important statement as *kenosis*, from the Greek word. By becoming a man, Jesus did not lay aside His deity. Charles C. Ryrie sheds light on this event: "Christ didn't become any less God, but He chose not to use some of His divine attributes. This involved a veiling of his preincarnate glory (John 17:5) and the voluntary nonuse of some of His divine prerogatives during the time He was on earth (Matt. 24:36). For God to become a man was humbling enough, but He was willing to go even further. Christ could have come to earth in His true position as King of the universe. Instead, He took the role of a servant. The Creator chose to serve His creatures."

Jesus did not come into existence as a baby in Bethlehem. As God, He always existed. He did

take on human nature as Jesus of Nazareth being made in human likeness but remained sinless (Heb. 4:15). Christ did not have a halo as paintings sometimes portray Him. He entered this earthly life looking like an ordinary man. Had you passed Him on a street, He probably would not have caught your attention.

2:8. Jesus, looking like a man, humbled Himself and became obedient to death. Mark 10:45, speaking of Christ, declares: *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Second Corinthians 8:9 is also helpful: *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”* Even though Jesus was equal to God the Father, He submitted to His Father’s will (John 5:30).

Becoming a man was humbling. Taking the nature of a servant was more humbling. Christ went still further. He humbled himself to the extent of being willing to die like a common criminal on a cross. Crucifixion was the most degrading kind of execution that could be inflicted on a man. It was the form of capital punishment the Romans employed for foreigners and slaves. Many died in this manner. Most paid the penalty for heinous crimes. Christ’s death was unique! He died but not for what He had done. He was sinless with no penalty to pay. He died for others. He died to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. Observe Galatians 3:13: *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’”* Isaiah 53:6 asserts: *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”* Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:14-15).

2:9. Following Jesus' humility and obedience, God the Father exalted him to his rightful position of honor and glory. Through the miracle of resurrection from the dead, God gave new honor to the obedient, humble Son. The Lord Jesus Christ resumed His preincarnate rank and dignity seated at the right hand of God's throne (Heb. 12:2). God bestowed upon Jesus the name that is above every name. The exalted Christ, seated at God's right hand, was now called "Lord." He became the object of worship for the church. He became the Master instead of the servant. The church became His slaves and looked to Him as their Lord. All this is a result of God's exalting the humble, obedient Son.

2:10-11. The result of Christ's humiliation was exaltation. Following His obedience, God the Father decreed at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. The emphasis here is on every creature in the universe acknowledging Jesus as the Lord of the created order. God's heavenly forces and His earthly church will honor Christ. Likewise, demonic powers and people who opposed Christ and His church will bow down before Him (see Isa. 45:23-24). In God's heavenly precincts, in humanity's earthly home, and in the devil's domain below the earth, every tongue will worship Jesus for who He is: The Lord, the Sovereign of the universe. These verses do not mean that all will confess Him as Savior, for the Bible offers no second chances after death (Heb. 9:27). This is the combination of worship from those who believe in Him and acknowledgment of His power and authority by those He has defeated. The honored place the Savior now occupies and the universal acknowledgment of His lordship in the future are all to the glory of God the Father.

- **What characteristics did Paul list as being indicative of the mind of Christ?**

- **Why are these characteristics revolutionary?**

- **Which of these characteristics is most lacking in your life?**

- **How have you been tempted to grow prideful in your spiritual walk?**

- **How has this temptation toward pride affected your ability to offer yourself fully to the spiritual revolution that is the church of Christ?**

APPLICATION

- 1 Some people believe inviting the work of the Holy Spirit into their lives requires extraordinary effort, but the disciples were doing very ordinary things when the Holy Spirit arrived. How might ordinary activities like Bible study, prayer, journaling, worship, and other spiritual disciplines invite the work of the Holy Spirit into your life?**
- 2 How can you avoid becoming judgmental of the work of the Holy Spirit around you, like some of the crowd in Acts 2?**
- 3 Christians are called upon to have the mindset of Christ. What would change in your life if you took on His mindset by humbling yourself completely to God's plan? What first step do you need to take?**
- 4 Who do you know that has not embraced the revolutionary message of the gospel? What responses should we be prepared for as we seek to tell the world?**

PRAY

Thank God that He has sent us the Holy Spirit. Pray that we would regularly submit ourselves to the guidance of His Spirit and that the mind of Christ would dwell within us. Thank God for blessing us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places and for inviting us to be participants in His gospel proclamation. Ask that He would walk with us as we seek to honor Him with our lives.