



to the **ENDS**  
of the **EARTH**

Studies in the Book of Acts

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Acts 2.1-41 | September 18, 2016

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series To the Ends of the Earth, learning about the gift of the Holy Spirit given to the earliest followers of Jesus - and to us, too!

II. Connecting with One Another

When were you last surprised? What was the occasion? Was there any lasting effect?

III. Study the Text

- a. Before engaging chapter 2, re-read Acts 1.1-8, then continue through the end of the chapter.

What do you see in these verses about how the disciples remained together, prayed together, and reflected upon the Scriptures together? What questions do you have after reading these verses? If you're meeting in a group, spend a few minutes sharing both your questions and insights.

- b. Read Acts 2.1

At the outset of chapter 2, Jesus' earliest followers remain together, either in the upper room (as in 1.13 and 2.46b) or a room in the temple (see 2.46a and Luke 24.53).

The term Pentecost has two meanings, one agricultural and the other historical. It was the second of three annual Jewish harvest festivals (see Deuteronomy 16.16-17) referred to either as the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks, since it took place seven weeks (or 50 days, hence the name *pentecost*) after the Passover (see, for instance, Exodus 23.16, 34.22, Leviticus 23.15, or Numbers 28.26). In addition, during the inter-testamental period (the 400 years after the end of the Old Testament and beginning of the New Testament era), Pentecost had also begun to be observed as "the anniversary of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, because this... happened fifty days after the Exodus."

Knowing this background of harvest and law-giving, what would you expect the Spirit of the Risen Christ to accomplish on this important day in the New Covenant?

Turn to Ezekiel 36.27 and Jeremiah 31.33 for hints!

- c. Read Acts 2.2-4.

Luke notes the occurrence of one singular dramatic event, accompanied by three supernatural signs - a surprising sound, a startling sight, and strange speech. While each seems like a natural phenomenon, they were supernatural in both origin and character (as foreshadowed by John the Baptist Luke 3.16, see also 1st Kings 19.9-13, and Hebrews 12.18-19, which continues the above reference to Mount Sinai).

Some have noted symbolism in each of these signs: wind as power, fire as purity, and speech as the universality of the gospel. Read the following passages, noting their significance to these symbols:

*Wind:* Psalm 78.26, Isaiah 28.2, Luke 24.49

*Fire:* Isaiah 6.1-7, Malachi 3.2

*Universality:* Isaiah 2.3, 66.18

- d. The Holy Spirit had been active before Pentecost, of course. See Genesis 1.1-2, Judges 6.34, 1st Samuel 16.13, Luke 1.30-37, 4.1 & 14, and Acts 10.38.

What, then, do you think changed on Pentecost?

- e. While nothing more is said of the "violent wind" or "tongues of fire" in the coming verses, Luke continues to explore the implications of the disciples' speech.

Without reading ahead, why do you think he does so? What's so important about speech?

- f. Read Acts 2.5-13.

While the purpose of Acts is to communicate how the gospel went "to the ends of the earth," this begins in Jerusalem, just as Jesus had asserted (1.8). "God-fearing Jews" from the "dispersion" had gathered for the Jewish festival.

While this was a one-time event, how do we replicate it every Sunday when we gather for worship?



If you're meeting in a group, go around the table and share the different places you live. And be specific! Share about what makes your neighborhood unique.

- g. In verse 7, these earliest disciples of Jesus receive a biting remark, as Galileans had a reputation for being uncultured. One author writes that they "had difficulty pronouncing gutturals and had the habit of swallowing syllables when speaking; so they were looked down upon by the people of Jerusalem as being provincial." (see Matthew 26.73, Luke 22.59, and John 1.46, 7.52 for examples)

Have you ever been the recipient of similar criticism because of your ethnicity, gender, education level, or age? What does this passage teach us about God's ability to use anyone in His Kingdom?

- h. Notice two things in verses 12-13: First, it is assumed that there is a meaning to this event. It is not a random occurrence. Secondly, those who mock the disciples do not deny the existence of the miracle, they merely misunderstand it.

How do you think people would respond to an event like this in today's culture?

- i. Read Acts 2.14-21.

During festivals, Jews fasted until after morning services concluded, rendering early-morning drunkenness impossible. Instead, Peter boldly declares, this fulfills prophecy from Joel 2.28-32, that the Holy Spirit had come.

How do you think Peter's words surprised those gathered that day?

How do they surprise you still today?

j. Time permitting, continue reading through verse 41, noting not only that the Spirit had come (verses 14-21), but further, how it happened - that Jesus was alive (verses 22-35), and why it happened - to save sinners (verses 36-41).

k. Read Genesis 11.1-9, then Revelation 7.9.

"The blessing of Pentecost [is] a deliberate and dramatic reversal of the curse of Babel. At Babel human languages were confused and the nations were scattered; in Jerusalem the language barrier was supernaturally overcome as a sign that the nations would now be gathered in Christ, prefiguring the day when the redeemed company will be drawn 'from every nation, tribe, people and language'. Besides, at Babel earth proudly tried to ascend to heaven, whereas in Jerusalem heaven humbly descended to earth."

How does understanding Pentecost this way prepare you to take the good news back to the end of the earth to which God has called you?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Pray that you would experience the ongoing presence of God's Holy Spirit, and that God would reveal any ways in which you could be more open to sensing the Spirit's presence,
- b. Ask God to give you opportunities to share your faith in natural, authentic ways with others in your home, neighborhood, workplace, or school,
- c. Lift up those who have not heard the gospel in their own language, that God would reveal Himself to them through His people.

#### Weekly Reading Schedule

Monday, September 19th	Acts 2.1-12
Tuesday, September 20th	Acts 2.14-21
Wednesday, September 21st	Acts 2.22-35
Thursday, September 22nd	Acts 2.36-41
Friday, September 23rd	Acts 2.42-47