

Commentary

¹ On the day of Pentecost all the Lord's followers were together in one place. ² Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting. ³ Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. ⁴ The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak.

⁵ Many religious Jews from every country in the world were living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And when they heard this noise, a crowd gathered. But they were surprised, because they were hearing everything in their own languages. ⁷ They were excited and amazed, and said:

Don't all these who are speaking come from Galilee?

⁸ Then why do we hear them speaking our very own languages? ⁹ Some

of us are from Parthia, Media, and Elam. Others are from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya near Cyrene, Rome, ¹¹ Crete, and Arabia. Some of us were born Jews, and others of us have chosen to be Jews. Yet we all hear them using our own languages to tell the wonderful things God has done.

¹² Everyone was excited and confused. Some of them even kept asking each other, 'What does all this mean?'

¹³ Others made fun of the Lord's followers and said, 'They are drunk.'

Acts 2:1–13

The day of Pentecost was the moment when Jesus' promise came true. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the power from on high that he had talked about and that they would need in order to start their work of sharing God's love with the whole world. Pentecost happened 50 days after Passover, and it was a harvest festival as well as being a time when the Jews remembered the day when God gave them the ten commandments.

For these first disciples, it took on a new meaning. They were the harvest of Jesus' work, and by God's Spirit his laws were now written on their hearts. Just as when Moses met with God at the burning bush, so these first believers were now on fire with the mysterious flame of God's power. Just as Moses had climbed Sinai to be given the law and the mountain had shaken with

God's glory, so the room where the disciples met thundered with God's presence. And just as God had breathed life into his first creation, Adam, so the wind of the Spirit filled the believers, giving them a new beginning as new creations. The wind literally blew them out on to the streets as each disciple bubbled over with words about God; and miraculously the cosmopolitan population of Jerusalem could all understand what they were saying, in every language spoken there. This was the birthday of the new people of God, the Christian church.

Visual aid

The Holy Spirit fell on the disciples as wind and fire. Tie some yellow, red and orange ribbons to the protective grill in front of an ordinary domestic fan so that when it is on, they blow outward like flames.

Activity idea

The Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak about God in languages that could be understood by each person in the crowd. Find out how to say words like 'Praise God', 'The Lord is great'

Questions

- ▶ What ideas do we get from this story about what the Holy Spirit is like?
- ▶ Why do you think God chose to come as the Holy Spirit in such a dramatic way?
- ▶ What different reactions did the crowds have to what happened?
- ▶ How did the disciples change from the way they were only moments before?

and 'Jesus is king' in a variety of languages. On the count of three, start shouting out these phrases together to give you a flavour of what it might have sounded like at the first Pentecost.

Prayer idea

What happened at Pentecost was a signpost to what the disciples would do next. The nationalities within the crowd represent the world as people understood it then, and the disciples would be taking the story of Jesus to these different places. Open up an atlas and find Jerusalem. Can you find some of the countries mentioned? Pray for God's church at work in these different places.

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Key verse

'We all hear them using our own languages to tell the wonderful things God has done' (Acts 2:11).

Old Testament story link

Joel 2:28–32: Joel predicts the day when God's Spirit will be poured out on everyone.

Taken from **The Barnabas Family Bible**

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