

REFLECTION GUIDE

ACTS 2:1-13 - DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT, ASCENT OF THE CHURCH

KEY TERMS

Pentecost - The Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22; Lev 23:15-16; Deut 16:9) that occurred 50 days after Passover (*pentecost* literally means “fiftieth”); many Jews travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival.

Galileans - People from the northernmost region of Israel, called Galilee; Galileans were often thought of as uneducated and uncultured.

Proselytes - A person who is not ethnically Jewish (a Gentile) but religiously converts to Judaism.

Tongues - Holy Spirit empowered utterances; from the Greek word *glossa* meaning “tongue” or “language”; tongues are mentioned in several places in the New Testament (Acts 2, Acts 19, 1 Cor 12-14).

DID YOU KNOW?

Some scholars believe that Luke’s list of people groups in v. 9-11 is meant to recall the groups of Noah’s decedents who populated the earth in Genesis 10.

Those people groups were scattered and given their own languages after building the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, whereas the groups in Acts 2 are brought together and understand the apostles, despite not speaking the same language.

BACKGROUND

In Acts 1, Jesus promises his followers that the Holy Spirit would come and now, as they waited together in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit comes. Luke describes the event vividly by saying there was a sound from heaven *like a mighty rushing wind* (v. 2) and that *divided tongues as of fire appeared to them* (v. 3). Both of these descriptors (wind and fire), are associated with the presence of God in the Old Testament (Ex 3:2-5; 1 Kings 19:11; Is 66:15). As the disciples are filled with the Spirit, Luke tells us that they *began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance* (v. 4), and Jews from all around the known world who were gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost can understand what the disciples are saying, even though they don’t speak the same language. These are the very beginnings of what we call today the universal Church. God, through his Spirit, is manifesting a directive we will see throughout scripture that his Church will be represented by every tribe, nation, and language.

GOING DEEPER

Read Exodus 3:1-12 and Isaiah 6:1-5. What similarities do you see between the way God manifests his presence in these passages and Acts 2? What’s different about Acts 2?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

ACTS 2:1-13 - DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT, ASCENT OF THE CHURCH

LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read Acts 2:1-13. Describe how you would portray this scene if you were a film director trying to accurately capture what happens (setting, sights, sounds, etc).
2. How do the events we see in Acts 2 begin to fulfill both the promise and purpose given in Acts 1:4-5, 8?
3. What is the meaning of this unique, supernatural event of multiple languages proclaiming the good news of God to multiple people groups? Why does God do this at the launch of the church?
4. Read Isaiah 32:15, Jeremiah 31:1-3, Ezekiel 36:36-37, Joel 2:28-29, John 14:16-17, 26, John 15:26, John 16:7, 13-14. How do these verses help you understand what a significant moment the arrival of the Spirit truly is?

LIVING THE WORD

5. Notice the reactions of the people watching the miracle and message of God (verses 12-13). How are these similar to the responses of people today when they experience the proclamation of God's mighty deeds?
6. How is the presence of the Holy Spirit in believers an assurance of God's love *for* us and an assurance of God's work *through* us?
7. Spend a few minutes declaring the mighty works of God to one another. If you need help getting started, use the following statements:
 - God is _____
 - Thank you, Lord, for _____
 - I am amazed by _____
 - I am so glad God _____