

Conversations on
Acts 2:1–21

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Search YouTube for “Working Preacher It’s Pentecost” to watch a video about the meaning of Pentecost. Discuss: What “problem” is created by Pentecost? Where do the disciples end up after the Holy Spirit comes? What are both Acts 2 and *It’s Pentecost* urging us to do?

WHAT is important to know?

This passage describes the impact of the Holy Spirit’s coming in two phases, first on the assembled disciples (Acts 2:1–4) and then on the gathering crowd (Acts 2:5–21). The occasion for the assembly of the disciples is the festival of Pentecost or Weeks, celebrated fifty days following the festival of Passover. Pentecost, originally a harvest festival, eventually came to commemorate the giving of the law at Sinai. The Spirit’s manifestation as wind and fire recalls similar images of God’s presence and activity in creation, exodus, and covenant making. (*Michael H. Floyd*)

- ✧ What are the similarities and differences between the two phases of the Holy Spirit’s coming?
- ✧ In what specific ways does the coming of the Holy Spirit in this Scripture passage recall “God’s presence and activity in creation, exodus, and covenant making”?
- ✧ Verses 12 and 13 explain reactions to the confusion experienced by those who were gathered. What do you think accounts for this confusion and the reactions?

WHERE is God in these words?

Theologically, the Christian church begins to take shape when the Holy Spirit fills those who believe in Jesus as the Messiah, enabling them to proclaim the gospel and to witness to the Christ “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The church emerges by the Holy Spirit, who dramatically establishes a fellowship of faith, calling believers into the household of God to be witnesses to what God has done in Jesus Christ for the purposes of salvation. The church is the place where this new fellowship begins to take shape as it recognizes the gifts of the Spirit in and for all people. (*Donald K. McKim*)

- ✧ What is “the household of God” above?
- ✧ What does it mean for believers to be called “into the household of God to be witnesses to what God has done in Jesus Christ for the purposes of salvation”?
- ✧ What has the Holy Spirit of God accomplished?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

The story of Pentecost is not meant to be a benchmark of what the church should look like on any given Sunday. Rather, it seeks to communicate how important the church is and how inseparable it is from Christ. Every year, on the Day of Pentecost, we are reminded of who we are as a church, what we proclaim, and the source of that proclamation. Pentecost sums up the gospel with simplicity and audacity: Jesus Christ offers salvation to all, and the church exists to proclaim it. (*Kristin Emery Saldine*)

- ✧ How is the church important in your life and in your journey of faith?
- ✧ Who are you as a church? What do you proclaim? What is the source of your proclamation?
- ✧ In what ways does your community of faith embody the phrase “Jesus Christ offers salvation to all, and the church exists to proclaim it”?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

Significant in this text is the radical social equality of those who receive the Holy Spirit. This becomes even clearer as the story in Acts unfolds. Old and young, women and men, slave and free all receive the power of God to prophesy, see visions, and dream. Occasionally God anoints big dreamers who with their lives and words paint upon a global canvas, renewing visions for human community. But God also anoints ordinary believers like the ones who sit in the pews. They too see visions and dream dreams that can move the church and its surrounding community a little closer to the “Lord’s great and glorious day” (v. 20). (*G. Lee Ramsey Jr.*)

- ✧ Why is it significant that a “radical social equality” exists among those who receive the Holy Spirit?
- ✧ What gifts have you received from the Holy Spirit? How can or do you use them?
- ✧ In what ways does your congregation recognize and call forth the gifts of the Spirit from each person?

Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit at work in your life.