

God Pours His Holy Spirit on His People



SABBATH—JULY 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 2:1–3; Acts 2:5–12; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:22–39; Psalm 110:1–3.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Jesus is the one God raised [woke up] from death. We are all witnesses of this. We saw him. Jesus was lifted up to heaven. Now he is with God, at God’s right side. The Father has given the Holy Spirit to him, as he promised. So Jesus has now poured out that Spirit. This is what you see and hear’ ” (Acts 2:32, 33, ERV).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE MEAN by the word “Pentecost”? Pentecost comes from the Greek word “pentekoste.” It is the name for the Jewish religious festival known as the Jewish Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22), or the Feast of the First Fruits (Numbers 28:26). First fruits are the first crops from the harvest. People gave the first fruits to God as gifts, fifty days after the Passover. The Passover is a special Jewish feast. Passover celebrates the time that God freed Israel from slavery in Egypt. So, the Feast of the First Fruits is a day of joy and thanksgiving. On that day, Israel brought God the “first gathering of grain” (Exodus 34:22, NLV).

So, the Feast of the First Fruits became a word picture for the first spiritual “harvest” of the Christian church. At that time, God poured the Holy Spirit on His people more fully than ever before. Then 3,000 people were baptized on one day (Acts 2:41). Many Bible thinkers say that Pentecost is the birthday of the church. Pentecost was the time in Bible history that Jesus’ followers, both Jews and later non-Jews, became God’s new community of believers on earth.



First fruits are the first crops collected during the harvest.

THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES (Acts 2:1–3)

Jesus commands His followers to wait in Jerusalem for God to give them the Holy Spirit. So, Jesus' followers obey. They wait and pray. They ask God for power over their sins. They praise God. Then the special day comes that Jesus promised. Jesus' followers "were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1, ERV). This place may be the same large room in Acts 1. Soon the believers will move to a place that is more public (Acts 2:6–13).

Read Acts 2:1–3. What miracles and special show of power happen at the same time that God pours His Spirit on His people?

First, there is a noise from heaven. It roars the same as a windstorm. The wind's roar fills the whole place. Then something that looks the same as small flames "came down on each" person (Acts 2:3, NLV). Yes, the Spirit always worked with God's people in the Old Testament. But now God's people see the Spirit's power with their own eyes. "During the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God showed the power of the Holy Spirit to humans in a powerful way. But humans never saw the whole power of the Holy Spirit. Now, Jesus' followers prayed for the gift of the Spirit that Jesus promised them. In heaven, Jesus added His prayers to His followers' prayers. Jesus asked God to pour the gift of the Spirit on His people."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 37, adapted.



Something that looks the same as small flames of fire "came down on each" person (Acts 2:3, NLV).

Before this miracle happens, John the Baptist tells everyone that God's people will be baptized by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; read also Acts 11:16). The baptism by the Spirit will happen after the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah is the Savior that God chose to free His people from sin. Jesus also talks about how He will give the Spirit to His followers (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Jesus asks God to pour the Spirit on His people at Pentecost. Pentecost is the time when God pours His Spirit on His church. Pentecost is the first time that Jesus works in heaven for His people (John 14:16, 26; John 15:26). At Pentecost, God's promise to His people comes true. God sends them the Spirit. Pentecost happened one time. But we need to ask God to fill us with His Spirit every day.

How do you know God's Spirit is working on your life?

JESUS' FOLLOWERS SPEAK IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES (Acts 2:5–12)

In Acts 2:4, the Holy Spirit gives Jesus' followers power to speak languages they did not know before. This gift is one of many gifts from the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45, 46; Acts 19:6). Other examples of gifts from the Holy Spirit are: (1) knowing the future (Acts 11:28); (2) special dreams from God (Acts 7:55); (3) speaking messages from God (Acts 2:8; Acts 28:25); (4) healing (Acts 3:6, 12; Acts 5:12, 16); and (5) having the wisdom and skill to do special work for God (Acts 6:3, 5).

Why does the Holy Spirit give Jesus' followers the gift of speaking different languages? Remember that in Acts 1:8, Jesus gives His followers special work to do on the earth. So, Jesus' followers need to speak the same languages as the people who need to know the Good News.

We learned that Pentecost was the special time when God poured the gift of the Holy Spirit on His church. Now read Acts 2:5–12. How do these verses prove that church leaders spoke in new languages at Pentecost?

How many Jews lived on the earth in the first century (years 1–100 A.D.)? Some Bible experts say there were less than two million Jews. Other experts say there were as many as eight million. Experts also say that maybe 60% of these Jews did not live in Judea, a part of Israel in the south. Many Jews from different lands traveled to Jerusalem for Pentecost. But these Jews did not speak Aramaic. The Jews who grew up in Judea spoke Aramaic at that time.

The church leaders do not speak in unknown or strange languages that no one understands. How do we know? We know because Acts 2:6, 8 uses the word *dialektos*. It means the language of a country or a group of people (read Acts 21:40; Acts 22:2; Acts 26:14). Clearly, Jesus' followers speak in the different languages of the time. It is a miracle that these men from Galilee now speak in languages they did not know how to speak only a few minutes before! Some Jews who hear Jesus' followers speak in these different languages think that Jesus' followers are drunk "from too much wine" (Acts 2:13, ERV).

Many people thought that too much wine—and not God—caused Jesus' followers to speak in different languages. How can we be careful not to think the same way?



The gifts from the Holy Spirit to the church include: (1) knowing the future, (2) special dreams from God, (3) speaking messages from God, (4) healing, (5) having the wisdom and skill to do special work for God, and (6) speaking in new languages.

PETER'S SERMON (Acts 2:22–32)

As we learned yesterday, some Jews think Peter is drunk (Acts 2). Their misunderstanding gives Peter the chance to explain the truth to the Jews about what is really happening. First, Peter points to the Bible (Acts 2:16–21). Peter uses the Bible to show the Jews that God is pouring the Holy Spirit on His people just as He promised.

Read Acts 2:17 and Joel 2:28. How are these two verses the same? When does Peter believe that Joel's special message from God will happen?

Joel's special message from God is a promise about the future. It talks about a future time when God will save His people (Joel 2:32). Many things will happen in nature at that time to show that God is ready to save His people. God will also pour His Spirit on His people during that time (Joel 2:28–31). Peter wants to help the Jews understand what is happening in Jerusalem. So, Peter reminds the Jews about Joel's message. Peter hopes Joel's message will help the Jews see that Pentecost is very important. When Peter says the verses in Joel, he makes an important change. Let us look at Joel's words first and then at how Peter says them. Joel begins his verse with the words "After this" (Joel 2:28, ERV). "After this" means that something will happen in the future. But Peter changes these words from "After this" to "In the last days" (Acts 2:17). This change shows us that the last part in God's big plan to save us already started. The early church does not know when the end will happen. But they believe it will be soon.



Jesus' coming back to life is the biggest proof that Jesus is the Savior that God promised to send His people (Acts 2:22, 27).

Read Peter's sermon in Acts 2:22–32. What is the most important truth in Peter's sermon about the Good News?

Peter talks about Jesus' life, death, and His coming back to life from death. Peter spends the most time talking about Jesus' coming back to life. Why? Because Jesus' coming back to life is the biggest proof that Jesus is the Savior that God promised to send His people (Acts 2:22, 27). Peter uses Old Testament verses to show the Jews how important Jesus' coming back to life really is.

Death is all around us. So, why is Jesus' coming back to life from death such an important truth?

JESUS HAS A PLACE OF HONOR AT GOD'S RIGHT SIDE (Acts 2:33)

In the third part of his sermon, Peter talks again about the Holy Spirit's gift that causes God's people to speak in different languages. This gift is the reason the Jews come to hear Peter talk in the first place. Peter tells them that he and the other followers who speak in different languages are not drunk. That would be strange at nine o'clock in the morning (Acts 2:15)! Then Peter explains that the believers speak in different languages because God poured on them the Holy Spirit from heaven.

Read Acts 2:33–36. In these verses, what is the connection between (1) God giving Jesus a place of honor at His side and (2) God giving the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers?

“At God's right side” (Acts 2:33, ERV) is a word picture. It shows us that God gives Jesus much power (Psalm 110:1–3). Peter explains that God poured out His Spirit on Jesus' followers because God gave Jesus a place of high honor in heaven. God does not give something new to Jesus. Jesus held this place of honor before (John 1:1–3; John 17:5). But now Jesus' place of honor shows everyone that God the Father sees His Son as both the Lord and Savior of all humans who believe in Him (Acts 2:36).

Jesus' place of honor at God's side is connected to one of the most important topics in the Bible: the big war between good and evil. This big war helps us understand that the Holy Spirit cannot fully come to humans until Jesus stands at God's right side (John 7:39). Jesus stands at God's right side because He wins the victory over sin at the cross (John 17:4, 5). These verses show us that Jesus needs to go to His place of honor at God's right side first. Then the Holy Spirit can come to this earth. The Holy Spirit's coming shows that God accepts Jesus' death for us. Jesus wins, and Satan loses (John 12:31). While Jesus is on the earth, He forgives sins and saves people from demons. The Cross gives Jesus the power to do those things. So, what happens when God accepts Jesus' death on the cross? God crushes Satan's work on the earth. And in our time, God will pour His Spirit on His people to get them ready for Jesus' Second Coming.



The Cross gives Jesus the power to forgive sins and save people from demons.

THE “FIRST FRUITS” (Acts 2:38, 39)

The Jews in Jerusalem listen to Peter talk. Peter’s words cut into their hearts. Some of the Jews listening to Peter may be the same people who asked the Romans to kill Jesus a few weeks earlier (Luke 23:13–25). But now, these same people believe that Jesus of Nazareth is God’s Chosen One. God chose Jesus to save His people from sin. The Jews who listen to Peter are very sad and sorry. They cry out: “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37, ICB).

Read Acts 2:38. As these verses show us, what two things do we need to have for God to forgive us?

Repentance means we feel sorry about sinning against God and others. Repentance means we fully change our lives. Repentance also means we turn away from our sins and stop doing them (Acts 3:19; Acts 26:20). Feeling sorry for our sins is more than feeling sad that we sinned. True repentance and faith are gifts we get from God. But we can choose to turn away from the gift of repentance or any of God’s gifts (Acts 5:31–33; Acts 26:19–21; Romans 2:4).

Starting in John the Baptist’s time, believers connected repentance with baptism (Mark 1:4). Baptism became an example of feeling sorry about sinning. Baptism also became a word picture for two things: (1) God’s washing away sin from the believer’s life and (2) the Holy Spirit’s giving the believer a new heart and mind to obey God (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; read also Titus 3:5–7).

In Acts 2:38, 39, God makes a special promise to anyone who turns away from sin and is baptized. What does God promise?

God offers the Holy Spirit to the Jews who listen to Peter. God also offers them the gift of forgiveness for their sins. The Spirit will help His people grow, serve the church, and do God’s work (1 Peter 2:9). What a wonderful gift! God starts the church because He wants its members to share the Good News with other people. From now on, the believers will know that God saves them. The Holy Spirit will help them share the Good News that Jesus gave them before He went to heaven.

What hope in Jesus can we offer people if we do not fully believe that Jesus washes away all our sins?



True repentance and faith are gifts we get from God.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: God poured the Holy Spirit on His church at Pentecost. Pentecost was the time when Jesus' followers, both Jews and, later, non-Jews, became God's new community of believers on earth. God's gift of the Holy Spirit to the church shows us an important truth. This gift shows us when Jesus' work in heaven started for us. It also shows us that heaven and earth are connected in wonderful and surprising ways we cannot fully understand.

"God lifts up Jesus to heaven. Jesus' going to heaven showed His followers that soon they will get the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to them. . . . Jesus enters heaven's gates. He sits on a throne with angels all around Him. These angels honor Him. As soon as the angels finish honoring Jesus on the throne, God pours the Holy Spirit on Jesus' followers. God gives Jesus glory and honor at the same time that He pours His Spirit on Jesus' followers. This honor and glory belonged to Jesus before anything was made. This honor and glory are the same honor and glory Jesus shared with God the Father. God pours the Holy Spirit on Jesus' followers at Pentecost to show that He accepts Jesus as man's Savior. God gives Jesus all power in heaven and on earth. Jesus is now our King and High Priest. [A high priest is someone who works to save his people and bring them to God.] God's gift of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers proves that Jesus is now their King and High Priest."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 38, 39, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 What things happened at Pentecost that our church today will experience in the same way?
- 2 The Jews in Jesus' time wait for the Messiah. The Messiah is the Savior that God chose to save His people from sin. But no one in Jesus' time thinks that the Messiah will die and come back to life. What important lesson can this idea teach us? Why do we need to know what the Bible teaches?
- 3 Acts 2:38 talks about how believers need to be baptized. What if someone believes in Jesus but dies before getting baptized? Will he or she be saved or not? Give reasons for your answer.



"God's gift of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers proves that Jesus is now their King and High Priest."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 39, adapted.