

OUR *Guide* FOR USE IN *the Protestant Reformed Sunday School*

Lesson 61

The Dawn of the New Dispensation

The Scripture Lesson *Acts 2:1-16*

Waiting eagerly in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit were 120 of Jesus' followers. For ten days they waited. Then the day of Pentecost came. Pentecost was one of the great religious festivals, or feast days, of the Jews. Jews from all over the world traveled to Jerusalem for this feast. It was on this great day that the Holy Spirit was poured out.

Early in the morning the 120 heard a loud roaring sound coming from the sky. It was a sound like a rushing mighty wind and it came and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

The wind is a picture, a sign, of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever *seen* the wind? You can see leaves blowing across your lawn. Perhaps you have even seen a house that was blown down by the wind. You can see what wind *does*; but you cannot see the *wind*. And you certainly cannot *stop* the wind.

Have you ever seen the Holy Spirit? Again, the answer is no. We can see what the Spirit *does*, but we cannot see the *Spirit*. The Spirit works the love of God in our hearts so that other people can see that we are different from the people of the world. The Spirit Himself, like the wind, is invisible, but we know He's there because we see

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what He does. And the Spirit is powerful. A man can no more stop the Spirit than he can hold back a tornado.

The second sign of the coming of the Spirit was the tongues as of fire that sat upon the heads of each of the disciples in that house. The people were not burned by it, for there was no real fire. God sent what *looked like* a flame of fire, and He did that because fire is a picture of the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as fire is used to purify, so the Holy Spirit makes pure the hearts of God's people.

People in the city of Jerusalem began to run toward the house, wondering about the loud sound that they heard — the sound of a strong wind when there was no wind. The 120 disciples then came out of the house. They had the Holy Spirit now, and suddenly they were able to *understand the work of Jesus*. And they wanted to tell others about it. So they began to talk to the people. And, lo and behold, when they did that, they found that they were able to talk in languages that they had never known before. How could these Galileans, who had never been taught by the Jewish Rabbis, and who had never gone to school to study foreign languages, suddenly speak, in other tongues, about "the wonderful works of God"?

That was the third sign of the coming of the Spirit. That the 120 were able to speak in other

languages showed that the gospel was no longer for one nation only. The good news of salvation would be for the people of every nation, and of every language, not simply for the Jews.

The people must have known that what they were seeing was a miracle. But there were some of them who did not like what they heard. For the disciples were talking about faith in Jesus, and these people hated the Christ. So they mocked and said that the disciples were able to do this only because they were drunk with new wine.

At that point Peter went to a place where all of this great multitude of people could see and hear him. He was going to preach to them. Can you imagine that? Peter had never preached a sermon before in his life. And here he stands up to preach to thousands of people! Before the coming of the Spirit he would not have dared to do that. He would not even have known what to say. Now he does!

Peter's Pentecostal Sermon

Acts 2:16-41

Peter began by telling the people that what they were seeing was really a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. Through the prophet Joel, God had said that someday He would pour out His Spirit on all of His people. And when that happens, the prophet said, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."

Yes, *all* of God's people will be *prophets*. Did you know that *you* are a prophet? That does not mean that you can tell what is going to happen tomorrow, or next year. The prophets in the Old Testament were sometimes able to do that. But that is not what it really means to be a prophet. To be a prophet means that one is able to understand the things of God and is able to tell others about them.

That is what the 120 disciples did. And, filled now with the Holy Spirit, that is what Peter does too. He tells the people about the way of salvation. For hundreds of years the Jews had *looked for* a Savior. Peter proceeds to show them that *Jesus* is that Savior, the promised Messiah.

First he reminded them of all of the miracles

Jesus had done. Those were signs, Peter said, that showed that God approved of Jesus. And yet the people had *killed* Jesus. They did not want a Messiah like *Him*. But, Peter continued, the One whom *they* killed, *God* raised up. How do we know that Jesus arose? Because, Peter said, we have *seen* Him.

Yes, there was a *resurrection*. And that, Peter said, should not *surprise* them, for David himself, in Psalm 16, prophesied that the Messiah would rise. And, not only that, but David had also prophesied, in Psalm 110, that the Messiah would be exalted to the right hand of God. That is where Jesus is, and from heaven He had sent His Spirit, the fruits of which the people were seeing now before their very eyes.

Peter's conclusion was this: "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." And then an amazing thing happened. The Spirit worked in the hearts of many of the people who were listening to Peter. They knew that they were guilty. They had *rejected* the One who was approved by God — the One who was now in heaven and would someday judge all His enemies. Was there any hope for them? Is there any hope for *us*, when we also "pierce" Him by all of our sins?

They cried then to Peter, "What shall we do?" "Repent," Peter answered, "and be baptized in the name of Jesus. And on that day *three thousand people were added to the church of Christ!*"

MEMORY WORK

Group A

Acts 2:23 "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

Group B

Acts 2:36b "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ."

ACTIVITIES

This paper has been prepared in the hope that it will be used by students of all ages. The activities are designed so that the oldest will be challenged, and the youngest will find some of it within reach. Parents should encourage their children to attempt only what they can handle without frustration. For some that will be much, for others little.

DO YOU AGREE?

If you do, write Yes; if you do not, write No.

___ 1. The rushing, mighty wind that accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit destroyed some of the homes in Jerusalem.

___ 2. If the disciples of Jesus had not been able to speak in other languages, the people who had come to Jerusalem from other lands would not have been able to understand what the 120 were saying about Jesus.

___ 3. The enemies of Jesus tried to convince the people that the 120 disciples of Jesus were drunk.

___ 4. Peter was chosen to preach the Pentecostal sermon because he had had some seminary training.

___ 5. Peter explained to the people that they were seeing and hearing the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel concerning the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

___ 6. Whereas in the old dispensation *some* of God's people were prophets, in the new dispensation *all* of God's people are prophets.

___ 7. The people learned from Peter's sermon that there is no salvation possible for those who were so wicked as to kill the Son of God Himself.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER READERS

1. Why was the time of the Feast of Pentecost a good time for the coming of the Holy Spirit?

2. The first sign of the coming of the Spirit was the sound of a roaring wind. How is the Holy Spirit like the wind?

3. What was the second sign of the coming of the Holy Spirit? Can you tell what the meaning of that sign was?

4. Of what was the speaking in tongues a picture?

5. How did some people mock the 120? Why did they do that?

6. What did Peter then do? How was he able to do that?

7. Peter pointed the people to a prophecy of Joel. What did Joel say would happen when the Holy Spirit was poured out?

8. Do you know what it means that *you too* are a prophet?

9. In Peter's audience were people who believed the Old Testament Scriptures but did not yet believe in *Jesus*. How did Peter prove to them that Jesus was really the Messiah?

10. Why was it true for Peter to say to the people that *they* had crucified Jesus? How are *we* just as guilty as they were?

11. How did the people answer Peter? How many were added that day to the church of Christ? Do you see how that was a proof of the work of the Spirit of Christ?

COMPLETING SENTENCES

1. The fact that the Holy Spirit was poured out at the time of the Feast of Pentecost helped assure that there would be many witnesses to the powerful signs that accompanied that great work of Christ for the church. This served well for the furtherance of the gospel, for tens of thousands of people crowded Jerusalem during feast days — not only from other parts of Judea, but from many other countries as well. And thousands of them came to the place where the 120 were; for they must have heard the _____ from heaven as of a rushing, _____ wind. They would have observed too that the roaring sound,

which started in the sky, seemed to descend till it settled on and filled all the _____ where the 120 were _____ (Acts 2:2). A powerful sign of the Spirit it was — a sign of the Spirit's source (heaven) and power (irresistible, though invisible).

2. The second sign was probably not witnessed by the multitude. For, within the house where the 120 were gathered, there appeared cloven _____ like as of _____ and it _____ upon them (Acts. 2:3). Another powerful sign of the Spirit — both as to His cleansing, sanctifying work in the child of God, and to His kindling in the hearts of God's people the fire of the love of God and the zeal for the things of Christ's kingdom.

3. The third sign, like the first, very soon became manifest to the multitudes. For, when the crowds began to gather at the house, the 120 came out and began to speak the _____ works of _____ (Acts 2:11). And the amazing thing was that, as they were filled with the _____, they began to speak with other _____, as the Spirit gave them _____ (Acts 2:4). There were in Jerusalem at that time Parthians and _____ and Elamites and dwellers in _____, etc. (Acts 2:9-11), and when one of the 120 would come upon a group of Parthians he would speak to them in their native tongue. The people were _____, because every man heard them speak in his own _____. They were confounded because these uneducated Jews were able suddenly to speak a variety of languages fluently. They therefore said to one another in amazement, "_____, are not all these which speak _____? And how hear we every man in his own _____, wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:7, 8).

4. Foreign-born Jews could understand the language of the Jews. So the speaking in other tongues, by the 120, was not necessary for communication. The speaking in tongues served rather as another sign, this one of the fact that the

good news of salvation in Jesus was not now for the Jews only but for the people of every nation and language. Those who heard the 120 speak in other tongues did not yet understand this, however, so, being in _____, they said one to another, "What _____ this?" They recognized the miracle and were apparently willing to wait for an explanation of it all. Others were not. They knew already, from what they heard the 120 say about Jesus of Nazareth, that they hated the message. They tried therefore to discredit the 120 and to explain away the great wonder, by saying, "These men are _____ of new _____" (Acts 2:12, 13).

5. Seeing the excitement of the people, the apostles must have understood soon enough the importance of a public address for this occasion. None of them had been trained in the art of preaching. Nor had any of them anticipated the need for making a sermon for an audience such as this. But ... Jesus had promised that they would receive _____, when the _____ would come upon them (Acts 1:8). And they felt already the truth of that. By common consent no doubt, Peter stepped forward as the spokesman and delivered, by the power of the Spirit, a masterpiece of a sermon — a sermon that demonstrated conclusively that by the outpouring of the Spirit the church had been translated, in a moment, from the dimness of the shadows of the old dispensation to the clear light of reality in the new.

6. Peter began by disposing of the slander of the scoffers in just a few words. "These are not _____, as ye _____," he said, "seeing it is but the _____ hour of the day" (Acts 2:15).

7. He then went on to give what *was* the explanation for the wonder. Not new wine, but the prophecy of _____, who had long ago foretold that in the _____ days (that is, the days between Christ's first and second coming) God would _____ out of His _____ upon _____ flesh. The "pouring" out suggests a much richer measure of the Spirit in the new

dispensation than in the old. And, further, it will be on *all* of God's people. No longer will there be only a few prophets to whom God reveals His secrets; but, said Joel, "your _____ and your _____ shall prophesy, and your _____ men shall see _____, and your _____ men shall dream _____." When the Holy Spirit is poured out, all will prophesy — that is, all of God's people will have an *understanding* of the truth and be able to *witness* to the truth (Acts 2:16-18).

8. Peter then showed that Joel not only spoke of the judgment of God that would come upon those who mock the prophets of God, but also that whosoever shall call on the name of the _____ shall be _____ (Acts 2:19-21). This thought led Peter directly into the theme of his sermon, that salvation is in Jesus, who is the Christ, and that the Holy Spirit is indeed the Spirit of the risen Lord.

9. Peter appealed first to the people's knowledge of Jesus' ministry. "Ye men of Israel," he said, "hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man _____ of God among you by _____ and _____ and _____..." (Acts 2:22). No reasonable person could doubt that Jesus' *works* proved that He was approved of God. And everyone in Peter's audience knew of those works.

10. It was this Jesus, who had *God's* approval, Peter continued, that "_____ have taken and by _____ hands have _____ and slain" (Acts 2:23). Not just the Roman soldiers, or Pilate, or the Jewish leaders, but *they*, all the people, were responsible for His death. For they had all concluded in their own minds that He was not their kind of Messiah.

11. But did not His *dying* prove that His claims were *false*? Hardly is that the case, says Peter, for, first of all, He was delivered to be slain by the determinate _____ and _____ of God. And, further, Him whom *they* crucified, *God* hath _____

up, having _____ the pains of death, because it was not _____ that He should be holden of it (Acts 2:23, 24).

12. And, Peter continues, the resurrection is not a thing to be wondered at, because it too was prophesied in the Old Testament. Referring his listeners to Psalm 16:7-11, Peter notes that David wrote, "... thou wilt not leave my soul in _____ (that is, in the grave), neither wilt thou suffer thine _____ to see _____ (in the grave)." Peter argued that the psalmist must have had someone else in mind, for, as everyone well knew, the patriarch David "is both _____ and _____ and his _____ is with us unto this day." At that point it was only a small step for Peter to assert next that David spoke of the Messiah. David, being a *prophet*, seeing this _____ spoke of the _____ of _____ (Acts 2:25-31).

13. Because of their respect for the Scriptures, the devout people in Peter's audience would have been willing to concede that Psalm 16 was Messianic. But how could they be persuaded that in speaking of the Messiah's resurrection David was speaking of *Jesus of Nazareth*? For that, Peter could offer the testimony of the apostles. This Jesus, he said, hath God _____ up, whereof _____ all are _____ (Acts 2:32).

14. But if Jesus arose, where is He? For this too, Peter goes on to say, they can look to the Scriptures. Psalm 110 is also Messianic. David could not have been speaking of himself when he said, "The Lord said unto my _____, Sit thou on my _____ hand," for David is not _____ into the heavens. If, therefore, Jesus is indeed the Messiah, it must be *expected* that He would ascend and be seated at God's right hand (Acts 2:34).

15. One thing remained for Peter to say. Jesus, being by the right hand of God _____, and having received of the Father the promise of

the _____, hath shed forth this which ye now _____ and _____. And the conclusion of it all? “Let all the house of Israel know _____, that God hath made that same _____, whom ye have _____, both _____ and _____” (Acts 2:33, 36).

16. When the people heard this, they were _____ in their _____. That is, their consciences condemned them. They knew that the death of the Messiah was rightly laid to their charge. He whom they had rejected was now seated at the right hand of heavenly power. Is there any hope for such sinners? “Men and brethren,” they said to Peter and the rest of the _____, “what shall we _____?” (Acts 2:37).

17. The wonder is that salvation is still possible, for sinners such as they were and as we are. “_____,” Peter said, “and be _____ every one of you ... for the _____ of sins.” Not all of Peter’s hearers believed, of course. But the amazing thing is that no fewer than 3,000 people _____ received his word and were _____. Such is the power of the Spirit (Acts 2:38, 41).

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. There was, as we saw before, typical significance in the fact that Jesus was crucified at the time of the Passover, and that the Spirit was poured out at the time of Pentecost. In addition, however, this timing helped in the rapid spread of the gospel. How did it do that?
2. What evidence can you find in the passage to show that, even before Peter’s powerful Pentecostal sermon, the devout people in the crowd were impressed, not only with the miracle of speaking with other tongues, but with what the disciples of Jesus were *saying* in those languages?
3. The enemies of Christ made a desperate attempt to discredit the disciples of Jesus by attributing their speaking in tongues to drunkenness. Can you think of other reasons, besides the early hour of the day, why this must have appeared to the rest of the people as nothing more than foolish slander?
4. For Peter to preach the sermon that he did on Pentecost was an amazing demonstration of the promised power the apostles would receive through the Spirit. Can you explain why that is so?
5. Peter told the people that they were witnessing the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy that in the last days God would *pour out* His Spirit on *all flesh* so that *your sons and daughters shall prophesy* (Acts 2:17). Can you explain what the prophet meant by the “last days”? Try to show also, from the events of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, how the italicized words above were fulfilled.
6. From Acts 10:45, 46 and Acts 19:6 we learn that the gift of speaking in tongues lasted beyond the day of Pentecost. Can you explain why that gift was helpful at the very beginning of the New Testament church but was no longer necessary later?
7. Why was it important for Peter first of all to remind the multitude of Jesus’ many miracles?
8. Many of the people in Peter’s audience had very likely not been present at the time of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion. Why could they not object when Peter told them that *they* had crucified Jesus?
9. What purpose was served, in Peter’s sermon, by his assuring the people that Jesus’ death was according to the “determinate counsel of God”? Why could not the people have responded that, if that were so, then they could not be blamed for Jesus’ death?
10. What did Luke mean when he said that the people in Peter’s audience were “pricked in their heart”? Try to explain, too, what Peter meant by his admonition to the people to “save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).
11. How was the response of the people a further evidence of the work of the Spirit of Christ?