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IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 61

Pentecost

Acts 2:1-16

Pentecost — What do you think of when you hear that word?

If you lived in Old Testament times you would think of a *feast day*, a religious holiday. Maybe you would travel with your Mom and Dad to Jerusalem. There you would see thousands of other people of God, all of them



coming to worship God in the temple, to thank Him at the end of the harvest season. We live in New Testament times. But still, as people of God, we celebrate the day of Pentecost. In our story for today we will find out why. Listen.

The followers of Jesus, you will remember, are in Jerusalem, waiting waiting for the great gift that Jesus said He would send them from heaven — the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, Jesus had said, would give them *power* — a power to remember, and to understand, everything that He had taught them for the past three years.

That's what the 120 followers of Jesus hoped for. They wanted to understand. Nothing in the whole wide world was more important to them at this moment than to be witnesses, to be messengers, to be ambassadors, of their King -their King, who ruled the world, from heaven, at God's right hand. The very thought of it was *thrilling*. But to be His witnesses, they needed understanding. Oh, yes, they were beginning to under-

Note to Parents: These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students - grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read to them, not by them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the "off" season.

stand. They knew something about Jesus' work, about His death, and about His resurrection and ascension. But ... how did it all fit together? That was the question. The disciples did not, as we say, see the whole picture. They could hardly wait, therefore, for the promised gift of the Spirit.

It was the time of Pentecost. The streets of Jerusalem, and the temple, were crowded with people from all parts of the Roman world. Maybe, thought the 120, just maybe, it will be *now*.

And it was. Early in the morning — when all of the 120 followers of Jesus were gathered in that upper room, they heard a deep, strange sound, like a mighty, rushing wind. It was far away at first. Far *up*. But it seemed to be getting closer. Louder and louder it got, like a roaring tempest hurrying toward them. At last it seemed to burst right into the room where they were sitting.

But no dust was blowing around. Not a single piece of paper blew to the floor. For there was no wind. Only the roaring *sound*. As a *sign*. A sign of the *Spirit*. The Spirit, you see, is like that.

Think, once, of a strong wind so strong that it uproots a tree, or blows down a



house. You didn't *see* the wind. But you knew it was there. All you had to do was look at the tree and the house. Just so, the Spirit. You know where He *is* — by what He *does*. If ever a boy or girl says, "I belong to *Jesus*!" then you know that *the Holy Spirit is there*. Just like the wind. But there's more. When the 120 looked around the room, they saw, on everybody's head, what looked like a little flame of fire. It didn't burn their hair. It just glowed. Another sign of the Holy Spirit.

What does fire do? Well, it does a lot of things. Have you ever sat by a bonfire on a cool day, and maybe roasted

marshmallows? Then you know that fire warms ... and softens. It warms you ... and softens the marshmallows. Think, now, of your heart — your spiritual heart. What is it like? One thing we know for sure about every man, woman, and child alive today is that his heart is cold and hard — unless God does something about it. What does He do? He sends His Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit who softens and warms hard, cold hearts. Like a little flame of fire.

So far, two signs: the sound of wind, and the appearance of fire. There was one more. Listen.

Think, first, of the thousands of people who were in Jerusalem. Did they hear that roaring sound? Oh, yes. Everyone in and around Jerusalem heard it. At first they looked up, for the roaring sound started in the sky. But then it seemed to come down, down ... till it settled in one place. People came running from all different directions, till they came together at that one spot, one house ... with an upper room. As they stare at the house, they see, coming out of the front door, 120 people. And then some amazing things happened. First was another *sign* — the third one. Foreign languages! The 120 followers of Jesus who came out of the house began to speak in *foreign languages*.

Think of that! You speak one language — English. If you ever wanted to talk to people of another language, you would have to study that language, long and hard. You would have to learn the *words*. You would have to learn

how to *pronounce* the words. You would have to learn how to put the words together in good sentences. Maybe after a year or so you would be pretty good at it.

Well, the 120 didn't have to study. There they were, mingling with, and talking to, the thousands of people who had gathered in the streets — people who spoke different languages. Suppose that one of the 120 (say, Matthew) would meet a family of Jews that had come from Egypt. Lo and behold, Matthew would begin talking to this family ... in Egyptian! And then, if he moved on and met someone from Crete, Matthew would talk to him in the Cretian language.

And that wasn't all. Listen to what they were talking *about*. The Bible tells us that they were speaking about "the wonderful works of God." So many things they had not understood before. Now, suddenly, they understand them. And their hearts burned within them (like the little flames that had been on their heads), so that they wanted to tell others about "the wonderful works of God."

The people listened in amazement. They looked at each other, and asked, "What meaneth this?" There were some wicked leaders of the Jews there too. They had an answer. They said, "Don't even bother listening to those people. They're just full of new wine. They're drunk."

That was silly, wasn't it? Who ever heard of wine making people able to speak foreign languages?

But what *did* it mean? Why *did* the Holy Spirit make the 120 able to speak in foreign languages? It was because "the wonderful works of God" will no longer be *just for the Jews*. The gospel, the good news, must be preached, not only in Judea, but also in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. To the Greeks and Romans. To white people and black. God's people must be gathered out of every nation, tribe, and language. Even ... us!

That's the meaning, the glorious meaning, of *Pentecost*.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. What was the first sign that the Holy Spirit was being poured out?

2. What was the second sign?

3. Why did hundreds of people gather around the house in which the disciples of Jesus were?

4. What marvelous thing happened when the 120 came out to the people in the streets?

Peter's Pentecostal Sermon

Acts 2:16-41 Not yet are we finished with the great wonder of Pentecost. The day began, you will remember, with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, little flames like fire, and speaking in foreign languages. Wonderful signs those were! But if that were the end of the story — if that's all that happened on Pentecost well, then, what a disappointment the coming of the Spirit would be.

The Holy Spirit must do something. Jesus had promised that He would. And, in the hearts of the 120, He had already done something. You remember that suddenly, for the first time in their life, they were able to *understand* what they had before been taught. And not only could they *understand* the things that Jesus had told them, but they could explain them, they could tell others about them. And, too, their hearts burned within them, so that, more than anything else in the world, they wanted to tell others about the great good news of salvation in Jesus.

Already, therefore, the Holy Spirit had *done something* — *in the 120*. With the Spirit in their hearts they had hurried out into the streets and "bubbled over" with their new knowledge of the wonderful works of God. Can you imagine how disappointed they would have been if the people in the streets listened to them and then said, "We don't believe a word of it"? The day that had begun with so much promise would have ended with a fizzle.

But that's not the way the day ended, as we shall see.

The apostles were paying close attention to what was going on. As we would expect, there was, in the multitude, a lot of milling around — people wandering from one group to another.



Things can get a little confusing when there are a hundred or more discussions going on at the same time in the same place. So ... the apostles decide that one of them should preach a sermon, for all to hear. They pick Peter. They find a place for him to stand. And they call all of the people to come and hear.

Can you imagine this? The people crowd around. Maybe as many as 5,000 of them! They are quiet, ready to listen.



And there stands Peter. He's a fisherman by trade. He has never gone to seminary. He has never preached a sermon before in his life. And

he didn't plan on preaching this one.

But this is *Pentecost!* The little church is learning marvelous things about the power of the Spirit. By the power of the Spirit, Peter preaches, on the spur of the moment, a powerful sermon.

What did he say? First, he tells the people what they are seeing. They are seeing, he said, the fulfillment of prophecv — the prophecy in *their* Bibles. What prophecy? The prophecy of Joel who prophesied that God would *pour out* His Spirit, and that then the sons and daughters of Jerusalem would prophesy.

That, Peter said, is exactly what you're seeing here.

And what are you *hearing*? The 120 are telling you about Jesus. I don't have to tell you about Jesus' mighty works, Peter said, because you know them. Those works *proved* that He was approved by God. And what did you do? You crucified Him.

But that, Peter said, was not the end of Jesus. For God raised Him up. That shouldn't surprise you, Peter said, because it was prophesied in your Bibles. None other than David himself foretold the resurrection of the Messiah. In the *Psalms*. And Peter showed them exactly where ---Psalm 16. There's the proof.

Peter knew he couldn't stop there. The people will surely ask, But how do you know that Jesus arose? Peter had the perfect answer. We saw Him. Ask anyone of these 120 people. Every one of them will be able to tell you that he saw

the risen Jesus with his own eyes. And if He arose, He must be ... the Messiah.

But, the people would ask, if Jesus did arise, where is He now? Again, Peter points them right straight to their Bibles.

This time to Psalm 110. Right there, Peter said, David prophesied the ascension of the



Messiah, His ascension to *heaven*, and His exaltation at the right hand of God.

And from heaven, Peter said, Jesus sent forth His Spirit — which you now see and hear. Yes, that's the answer to

your question, "What meaneth this?" Before your eyes and ears you have the *proof* that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

That was the end of Peter's sermon. What now will the people do? Will they say, "We don't believe a word of it"? Surely some of them did. But — and here's the real wonder of Pentecost many of them did not. They were, the Bible tells us, "pricked in their hearts" that is, by the *Holy Spirit*. They saw their sin — their grievous sin of killing the Messiah, and they wondered, "Is there any hope for us?"

Yes, Peter said, there is. Repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus. And they did. The little church of Christ grew from 120 to more than 3,000! In one day! Such was the power, the real power, of Pentecost!

How Well Did You Listen?

1. Who preached the first Pentecostal sermon?

2. Which of the Old Testament prophets had prophesied that God would one day pour out His Spirit on His people?

3. What famous Old Testament king had prophesied that the Messiah would rise from the dead, and then ascend to heaven?

4. Peter explained to the multitude how he and the 120 could *know* that Jesus had risen from the dead. How *did* they know?

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5. How many people were added to the church that day?

How Well Do You Understand?

1. Can you tell how the Holy Spirit is like the *wind*?

2. How is the Holy Spirit in our hearts like a little flame of fire?

3. Many people can speak more than one language. Why, then, was it such a

wonder that the 120 could do that?4. Wicked people in the multitude said, "They're just drunk." Do you know why they would say such a thing?

5. Why would it have been surprising to the multitude that a man like *Peter* could preach such a powerful sermon?

Memory Verse

Acts 2:17b "And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."

