

October 18, 2020 by Steve Brandon



# Pentecostal Power

## Acts 2:1-21

### 1. Experienced (verses 1-13)

### 2. Explained (verses 14-21)

In 1998, my wife (Yvonne) and I had the privilege of traveling to Israel with the Master's Seminary to take a three-week class in the Holy Land. We spent much of our time in Jerusalem. We also spent a week in Galilee (in the north). We took a trip south, and even to Jordan! While in Israel, we had quite the adventure.

Though we were sight-seeing, we were there taking a class. Yvonne received an A with a 96% core on tests. I received an A- with a 93% score on tests. So, if ever you are wondering who is smarter, ...

Well, pertinent to our message today, is what happened one Sunday when we were in Israel. Because of our photo album, I can give you the date: May 31, 1998. On the docket that day was a trip to Masada, in southern Israel. As we walked to catch our bus, we noticed a whole swarm of Hasidic Jews that had descended upon Jerusalem. They were everywhere. We had been in the city long enough to know that this was different than normal. During our days previous in Jerusalem, we saw the Hasidic Jews all over the place. But never in the numbers that we saw on that morning. We didn't know what was happening. Why were there so many Jews in the Old City of Jerusalem all of a sudden?

Our teacher in Israel told us that it was Pentecost. These Jewish people had come from all over Israel (and all over the world) to worship in Jerusalem. Here is what Yvonne wrote in the photo album of our trip:

Sunday, May 31 [1998] Today is the Jewish Holiday of Pentecost. As we walked out to the bus this morning, hundreds of Jews were walking out of the Old City, having already been at the Western Wall for prayers.

This happens every Pentecost Sunday, every year. [\[1\]](#) Crowds of Jews from around the world gather to worship in Jerusalem. And what happens in Jerusalem today, happened during the days of the apostles. People from all around the world gathered to worship in Jerusalem. But the Pentecost Sunday recorded in Acts 2 was unlike any Pentecost Sunday before and unlike any Pentecost Sunday since. It is when the Holy Spirit descended upon the believers in Jerusalem. And we read about this in our text this morning.

My message this morning is entitled, "Pentecostal Power." We will be looking at verses 1-21. But for the sake of context, I want to read all the way through verse 41, because it is all one unit. Here we see the power of the Holy Spirit come. And we see Peter being a witness to the resurrection (see Acts 1:8).

#### Acts 2:1-41

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams;  
even on my male servants and female servants  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,  
and they shall prophesy.  
And I will show wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;  
the sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the day of the LORD comes,  
the great and magnificent day.  
And it shall come to pass that everyone  
who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him,

"I saw the Lord always before me,  
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;  
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
my flesh also will dwell in hope.  
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,  
or let your Holy One see corruption.  
You have made known to me the paths of life;  
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

"The Lord said to my Lord,  
"Sit at my right hand,  
until I make your enemies your footstool."

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Our text begins: on the day of Pentecost. You see that in verse 1, ...

#### Acts 2:1

When the day of Pentecost arrived, ...

Pentecost is the name of the Jewish holiday that was celebrated fifty days after the Passover. You can see that in the name. A pentagon is a five-sided figure. The headquarters of the United States Department of Defense is located in a building called, "The Pentagon," because of its shape. The name of the first five books of the Bible is "The Pentateuch," because there are five books in this collection.

Pentecost means "fiftieth." It is celebrated the "fiftieth" day after Passover. Passover always lands on a Saturday in March or April. So Pentecost often lands in May.

Pentecost is one of the three major Jewish feasts. The three are mentioned in Exodus 23:14-17. Consider the passage. The LORD says, ...

#### Exodus 23:14

"Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me.

Then Moses lists them. The first comes in verse 15, ...

#### Exodus 23:15

You shall keep the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed.

The Feast of Unleavened bread is also called, "Passover." It takes place in March or April every year. It's when the people come to remember how the angel of the LORD "passed over" the children of Israel, those who had the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. Nobody died in their homes. But those without the blood lost their firstborn son. And this was the trigger to stir Pharaoh to release the Hebrews from their slavery in Egypt. Israel was never to forget the redemption that God provided. Every year, the Jews were commanded to keep a feast to

the LORD in remembrance of this event.

The second feast comes in verse 16. This is called “the Feast of Harvest.”

Exodus 23:16

You shall keep the **Feast of Harvest**, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field.

The “Feast of Harvest” is also called “Pentecost,” which we are looking at this morning. As I said before, it comes 50 days after the Passover. It celebrates the first of the harvest that comes in, the early crops. Often, this is called “the barley harvest” (see Ruth 1:22), because you harvest barley in the spring. Finally, the third feast comes in the second half of verse 16, ..

Exodus 23:16

... You shall keep the **Feast of Ingathering** at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.

“The Feast of Ingathering” is much like our “Thanksgiving.” It celebrates the end of the growing season. It celebrates the harvest come into the barn. It’s an opportunity to thank the LORD for his kindness and goodness to us to provide for us another year. Finally, we read in verse 17, ...

Exodus 23:17

Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God.

And this is important to understanding our text this morning. During the days of the Bible, there were Jews scattered throughout all the world. Some were living in Asia. Others were living in Egypt. Others were in Rome and Arabia. They lived far and wide from Jerusalem.

And they were commanded to come to Jerusalem three times a year to worship the LORD in the temple. Now, for pragmatic reasons, when travel was slow, and it took a month to travel to Jerusalem, this command was impossible to keep for everyone. But for those who lived in traveling distance from Jerusalem, certainly, these feasts were reason to travel to Jerusalem.

Regardless of how far away a Jew lived in Bible times, there was always the push to be in Jerusalem for each of these three feasts. Today, whenever the Jews finish their Passover feast, they sing a song that says, “Next year in Jerusalem!” It expresses the desire of Jews to celebrate the feasts and festivals in Jerusalem. Paul experienced that push. In Acts, chapter 20, we see Paul headed for Jerusalem, hoping to be there in time for Pentecost. Ephesus was just a little out of the way, a few miles into shore. Paul spent three years on Ephesus and knew and loved many people there. He surely wanted to see many of them. But Paul was not willing to go, lest his little detour turn into a big detour and he not get to Jerusalem for Pentecost.

Acts 20:16

Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

Here’s my point: Pentecost was a high holy day for the Jews. People would come from every nation to worship the LORD on that day. That’s what Yvonne and I experienced when we were in Jerusalem on Pentecost Sunday, when many Jews from all around the country (and some from around the world) descended upon Jerusalem for worship. And what we experienced is what Peter experienced, with crowds of people in Jerusalem. At the end of Peter’s message, we see 3,000 people believing! (Acts 2:41). Let’s pick up the narrative:

Acts 2:1

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

Now, the “they” of this verse goes back to chapter 1, where we saw 120 people together. In chapter 1, they were together in “the upper room” (Acts 1:13). Here, we simply know that they were together. Perhaps they were in the same room. Perhaps they were in another room. He knows from verse 2 that they were inside some house. We may not know where they were. But we do know what they were doing. Certainly, they were praying and waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus had commanded them to do.

Acts 1:4-5

While staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

And this is exactly what took place. They were baptized with the Holy Spirit in Acts, chapter 2. They experienced the power that Jesus promised them. Do you remember Acts 1:8?

Acts 1:8

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

This is what happened in Acts, chapter 2. This is why my message this morning is entitled, “Pentecostal Power.” Because they experienced the power of the baptism of the Holy Spirit on that day. This is why my first point is, “Pentecostal Power ...

## 1. Experienced (verses 1-13)

Acts 2:2-4

And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

At this point, all I can do is describe what happened. The 120 followers of Jesus were all together in some house in some room. They were all seated. And, there was a sudden sound, "like a mighty rushing wind" (Acts 2:2). It's as if someone turned on the fans! The chaos ensued. The whole room was swirling about with air flowing all around. Only, that's not quite it, as Luke wrote, it was "**like** a mighty rushing wind." In other words, it wasn't a rushing wind. It was like that. That's the best comparison that Luke could give.

Another comparison comes in verse 3, "And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them." Again, Luke describes the scene using a comparison. There were "divided tongues as of fire." This isn't what it was. But it was what it was like.

Now, I have no idea how to picture this. I've never seen a "divided tongue" before. I have no idea how a tongue can appear "as a fire." Furthermore, I cannot vision how these tongues rested on each of those who were present. I have seen many pictures of those who have tried to depict this event. And the most common picture is that of little flames of fire above the heads of those who were present. But I sense that it was much more violent and confusing, with the wind and the fire swirling around in chaos and confusion. Like being in the midst of a violent storm, with wind blowing all about. Only here there was some sort of element of fire. Somewhat like fire twisting in the wind.

Now, regardless of what this was exactly like, we can picture verse 4, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." So picture a crowd of people, a little bit like our fellowship after church here. There's a rumbling buzz in the air with everyone talking with everyone. However, rather than speaking in English, picture everyone speaking different languages. One is speaking Spanish. Another is speaking French. There's some Russian and Italian and Chinese also in the room. And if you knew a bit about languages, you could detect the Swedish and German and Japanese.

This is what it was like in Acts 2. A bunch of languages, all spoken in this crowd, "as the Spirit gave them utterance." In other words, they weren't speaking of their own accord. It was the Holy Spirit that was giving them what to say. It was the Holy Spirit that was giving them the language to speak. This was super-natural. This was powerful. This was "Pentecostal Power."

In verses 5-13, we see how powerful this was, as the scene shifts from the 120 disciples in the room to the crowds outside who had gathered for the Pentecost celebration.

#### Acts 2:5-12

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

Somehow, this experience of tongues in the room flowed out into the crowds. The reaction to the crowds was one of confusion and awe. "They were bewildered" (verse 6). "They were amazed and astonished" (verse 7). "All were amazed and perplexed" (verse 12). Because, this wasn't merely an ethnically diverse international gathering, with a rumble of many languages spoken in the crowd. No, this was a homogenous society displaying linguistic variety. It takes years to learn a language. And these disciples learned in a moment because the Holy Spirit was pouring out his power upon his people. And they all were experiencing this power.

Some were speaking. Some were hearing. Those speaking were from Galilee. And those who heard were from all over the world. And they amazing, astonishing, and perplexing thing is that these Galileans were speaking the languages of the world. We know that these were known languages because of the comments from the crowd, "we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (verse 11). There were Parthians, hearing their own language. There were Medes, hearing their own language. There were Elamites, hearing their own language. There were residents of Mesopotamia, hearing their own language. There were residents of Judea, hearing their own language. There were residents of Cappadocia, hearing their own language. There were residents of Pontus, hearing their own language. There were residents of Asia, hearing their own language. There were residents of Phrygia, hearing their own language. There were residents of Pamphylia, hearing their own language. There were residents of Egypt, hearing their own language. There were residents of Libya, hearing their own language. There were Romans, hearing their own language. There were Cretans, hearing their own language. There were Arabians, hearing their own language. And they were hearing "the mighty works of God."

Perhaps they were hearing the Psalms. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised!" (Psalm 145:3). "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, For his steadfast love endures forever!" (Psalm 107:1). "O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is your name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:1). Perhaps they were hearing the stories of the Old Testament, like the story of God's power demonstrated in the Exodus, or like God's working to see David defeat Goliath. Perhaps they hearing of the "great things" that the LORD had done for Israel when the captives were brought back to Zion (Psalm 126). All of these stories tell of the mighty works of God. Perhaps they were telling of the wonders of the life of Christ! How Jesus of Nazareth, lived a perfect life. And yet, died as a criminal, but was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven!

We don't know exactly which "mighty works of God" were being told. But we know that they were being told in languages that could be understood. This is the understanding of tongues that ought to be in your mind. People speaking known languages that they have never studied. Too often today, people think that gibberish is tongues, where people are making indistinct sounds, like the babble of a baby, and they call it tongues. Baby babble isn't tongues. Tongues is the speaking of a known language that is unknown to the speaker. Sadly, this sort of baby babble takes place in "Pentecostal" churches. But the power of that Pentecost Sunday wasn't babble. It was fully understood by those who heard: God is doing his mighty works among us! This was the coming of the Holy Spirit with power just as Jesus had said (Acts 1:8).

And then, in Acts 2, we see Peter responding as a witness to what took place. He spoke because there was confusion. In verse 13 we read, ...

Acts 2:13

But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

This was an accusation against the work of God. And Peter sought to set things straight. His explanation begins in verse 14. This is my second point. We see Pentecostal Power ...

## 2. Explained (verses 14-21)

First of all, Peter deals with the accusation that came in verse 13, when people were saying that these people were drunk.

Acts 2:14-15

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day."

According to the Jewish clock, the first hour is when the sun rises, 6am in general. So, the "third hour of the day" is 9 o'clock in the morning. And Peter said, "People don't get drunk at 9 o'clock in the morning." That is, unless you go to Knox College, where I went to school

I went to Knox College, in Galesburg, Illinois. I had a great time there. I wouldn't exchange my experiences for the world. Yet, it was an ungodly place. It was not a Christian school. I saw some of my fellow students, "filled with new wine" in early hours of the day. But this wasn't the pattern. Usually, the students got drunk at night at the parties. But, on one occasion every year, students would drink early in the morning.

This occasion was "Flunk Day" at Knox College. The single day during the Spring Semester that nobody knows when it will come, except a select committee of students who plan the entire event. It's a day when all classes are canceled with full support of the administration. And all sorts of games are played, like tug of war over a muddy pit, or like water balloon fights. Activities are provided, like roller blades and zip lines and bounce houses. Sometimes an Abe Lincoln impersonator would show up, and join in a game of softball.. There was music and dancing, and of course, drinking. And there is drinking at 9am, because the day begins as a surprise to everyone somewhere around 5am, when those on the Flunk Day committee run through the dorms blowing whistles and yelling, "It's Flunk Day!" And (most everyone), except for me and a handful of others who didn't drink alcohol, grabbed their beers, (or the bottle of wine that they were keeping until Flunk Day), and went outside and began dancing in the street and frolicking about, saying to everyone they saw, "Happy Flunk Day!"

And I saw plenty of drunk people at 9am. But this was not the norm. It was only once a year that I saw this. And this is what Peter was pointing out. "For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day" (verse 15). It wasn't "Flunk Day" in Jerusalem. It was the day of Pentecost! The Spirit arrived. And Peter explained the arrival. He says,

Acts 2:16

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

Peter then proceeds (in verses 17-21) to explain the significance of what was happening. He said, in effect, "This is the fulfillment of the Scripture found in Joel 2:28-32. Joel prophesied of this day, when the Spirit would come upon us and everyone would prophesy, young, old, men and women. Here is what Peter said, ...

Acts 2:17-18

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams;  
even on my male servants and female servants  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,  
and they shall prophesy.

I have no doubt that among the 120 disciples who were awaiting the coming of the Spirit, there were men and women. There were young and old. There were servants, male and female. And they all were speaking in foreign languages that were unknown to them, but that others understood. This was the sign of the coming of the Spirit that Joel prophesied would take place. This is Pentecostal Power! The Spirit coming and men and woman and young and old speaking in tongues!

It was the dawning of a new day, when the people of God would all be filled with the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit filled only certain men, for specific tasks, like Joshua (Numbers 27:18) and David (1 Sam. 16:12-13) to lead the people of God. The Spirit filled Eldad and Medad to prophesy (Numbers 16:26). The Spirit empowered Samson to deliver Israel from the Philistines (Judges 13:25). The Spirit filled Ezra to teach the people of God (Neh. 9:20, 30). But in the Old Testament, the Spirit would come and go, according to the need of the moment.

But ever since the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit has come to dwell among us, never to leave us. The Spirit will always be with us to comfort us and guide us and help us. We do not need to pray (as David did), "Take not your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). He had seen the Spirit come upon Saul and leave because of Saul's sin. David, though he sinned with Bathsheba, pleaded that this would not happen to him. But

such will never happen to us. The Holy Spirit will not depart from a New Testament believer. Rather, the Holy Spirit will always be present, working in our lives. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come as our comforter and helper (John 14, 16). The Holy Spirit has come to sanctify us (Galatians 5:22-23). The Day of Pentecost was the Holy Spirit's announcement that he was here to stay! Are you thankful? Are you thankful for this day.

Now, there were some things in Joel's prophesy that didn't take place on that day. These are the catastrophic signs and wonders in the heavens that he speaks about in verses 19-20.

Acts 2:19-20

And I will show wonders in the heavens above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;  
the sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the day of the LORD comes,  
the great and magnificent day.

The reason why Joel says these things is because he is prophesying of two days. The first day is the day connected with the ministry of Jesus during his first coming. The second day is that day when Jesus will come in his might to rule and reign. In that day, there will be much destruction upon the earth. The sun and moon will be darkened. This will come when Jesus avenges his enemies and rules the world. This is what Joel is about. He speaks much about the Day of the LORD, that day of destruction and judgment.

I believe that Joel quoted verses 19 and 20 because he wanted to get to verse 21, ...

Acts 2:21

And it shall come to pass that everyone  
who calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved.'

Here is Peter standing up on the day of Pentecost, knowing clearly that everyone who calls upon the LORD will be saved. This should give you great hope today. This is what salvation is. It is calling upon the LORD. He alone will save you from your sin.

Our world today is filled with many, many problems. We are divided racially. We are divided politically. The presence of COVID-19 has revealed divisions among us. The only one who can help you deal rightly with this is Jesus. He is the one who gives the strength to walk through these things rightly.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 18, 2020 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org](http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org).

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[1] Perhaps the only exception was this past year (2020) due to the COVID-19 crisis.