

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

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Sermon manuscript

### **Series: Next!**

(studies in the book of Acts)

### **Wind, Fire, Word**

(Acts 1:15--2:41)

#### **Introduction:** Explaining the inexplicable...

OK. Real quick, take out a sheet of paper and write out a brief explanation of God. Just a couple of pages should do it.

In your written explanation, make sure that you include a sentence or two on His sovereignty, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, justice and holiness, grace and love, immutability, self-existence, and transcendence.

When you've finished writing that paper, write another short one explaining the Trinity.

I know the word doesn't occur in the Bible. But the concept is there.

Come up with a better word (if you can) to describe how there is a Father who is worshiped as God, a Son who is worshiped as God, and a Holy Spirit who is also worshiped as God.

Of course, you'll want to avoid the equally grave mistakes of saying that we believe in three gods AND the error of saying that God is one Person playing three roles. Use illustrations if you wish - an egg, for instance - but show how the illustration falls short of really demonstrating the truth that **the one true God has existed eternally in three Persons.**

And for your final assignment, write a brief paper describing the Person and Work of the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Shouldn't be too hard, but don't forget to address the issues of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the fruits and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and what it means to "blaspheme" the Holy Spirit (the only sin Jesus said was unforgivable - Matthew 12:31)

Also address, even if only with a brief paragraph, what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The final section of your paper should point out what practical importance the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to your own personal life.

Hello, headache.

Each of these assignments, if you were to accept them, would be daunting. Of course, we spend our lives learning as much as we can about God and His ways. But in asking you to explain God, the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit, I've asked you to explain the inexplicable.

Of the three projects I just lined out, however, I suspect that the most challenging might be the third.

The Holy Spirit is, almost by definition and for most everyone, an enigma. Dr. Gordon Fee, who has written one of the best books on the Holy Spirit I've ever read, is of the opinion that for most believers the Holy Spirit is regarded as a gray, oblong blur, difficult to understand and hard to relate to.<sup>1</sup>

The Spirit of God has been active from the very beginning, literally. In Genesis 1 we read that the Spirit of God was moving/hovering over the surface of the waters prior to creation. In the Old Testament, He empowered kings and inspired prophets.

But, beginning on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given to God's people in ways He never had been before.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Fee is a distinguished scholar and a Pentecostal. His book, Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God, has been very helpful to me as I have tried to better understand the Person and work of the Spirit.

The age in which you and I are blessed to live is marked by certain spiritual distinctives. The Bible tells us that we are living in the age of grace and in the age of the church. We are also living in an age in which the Holy Spirit is particularly active.

Today, we see His power unleashed on the early church in the form of **WIND**, **FIRE**, and **WORD**.

### *Review*

Last Sunday we began a series of studies in the New Testament book of Acts.

We listened as the resurrected Jesus, at the end of forty days of post-resurrection fellowship, told His eleven remaining disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were *“baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

He told them that after this baptism, the Holy Spirit’s power would transform them - Peter and John and James and Andrew and the rest - into powerful witnesses for the Gospel.

Jesus ascended into Heaven and the disciples gave themselves to praying. Luke tells us that they were devoting themselves to *“THE prayer”* - almost certainly *“the prayer”* that God would send the Holy Spirit!

This morning as we turn to Acts, chapter 2, we watch as their prayer was answered in spectacular fashion one day in Jerusalem.

We know that the group of disciples took time off from their ten days of prevailing, fervent prayer to select Matthias to take the place of Judas Iscariot as the twelfth apostle.

\*\*\*See Appendix for comments about the replacement of Judas Iscariot with Matthias.

Some time shortly after choosing Matthias, the events occurred that are recorded in Acts, chapter 2.

On the Jewish calendar there is a festival fifty days after the feast of Passover. It’s called Pentecost.<sup>2</sup>

On the main day of festival of Pentecost, all of Jesus’ disciples were gathered together in one place.<sup>3</sup>

The place where they had gathered is never identified. It is referred to as a home where they were seated and we know that it was in Jerusalem.

Beyond that, we don’t know anything about the physical location.<sup>4</sup> In that location, though, a spark ignited that got quite a fire going.

### **The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (vv. 1-13)**

#### **Disciples are Baptized by the Holy Spirit! (vv. 1-4)**

*Every Christ-follower in one place (v. 1<sup>5</sup>)*

*[2:1] When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.*

The Day of Pentecost was - and is - one of the holiest days on the Jewish calendar.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> One of the purposes of the feast was to commemorate the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. But, the primary rationale for observing Pentecost was to celebrate the end of the wheat harvest in Palestine in early June.

<sup>3</sup> That kind of a gathering hasn’t happened since and won’t happen again until Heaven!

<sup>4</sup> It is not unheard of to have referred to the Temple as a house. Further, the Gospel of Luke ends with the comment that the disciples were *“continually in the Temple, praising God.”* (Luke 24:53) Others have suggested, though, that the disciples were actually meeting in a large house near the Temple, and that is not out of the question, either.

<sup>5</sup> There is a long history of seeing, in the rites of Pentecost, symbolism for the inauguration of the church. At Pentecost, the Jews were to make two loaves from the first fruits of the wheat crop. Presumably, the two loaves symbolize the two bodies from which the church was to be formed - Jews and Gentiles. As well, these two loaves were to be made with leaven in them, a symbol of sin throughout Scripture. This is to indicate that the people who make up the church are sinners, not perfect people at all.

<sup>6</sup> The Jews referred to Pentecost as “The Festival of Weeks” because it was celebrated “a week of weeks” (plus a day) after Passover.

Like all of the major holy days, Pentecost provided a break from work. For our purposes, that's important because lots and lots of people were milling around Jerusalem with not much to do.

In the morning on the day of Pentecost, three distinct, very obvious and very unusual things happened where the disciples had gathered.

*The sound of a tornado (v. 2)*

***[Acts 2:2] And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.***

Notice that there is no hint here that it got windy. It was just noisy. And it wasn't the sound of wind lightly rustling the leaves on a tree. It was the sound of a great, rushing wind.

People who have experienced a tornado tell us that the sound is like a freight train! THAT is the sound that is filling the air where the disciples are. And the sound was to audibly announce the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

In Greek, there is one word for wind, breath, and spirit. It is the word *pneuma*. (think "pneumatic tools" - air powered).

The wind is invisible, but it leaves behind very visible effects. It is refreshing and powerful and unpredictable. The breath of a loved one is sweet and personal to us.

By arriving with the sound of a wind, the Holy Spirit is revealing Himself to be powerful, personal, and wildly unpredictable.

But the Spirit's arrival was visible as well as audible.

*Fire-like tongues on each disciple (v. 3)*

With the sound of the wind roaring in their ears, the one hundred and twenty disciples were visited with the appearance of fire.

***[Acts 2:3] And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.***

Notice again. It wasn't actually fire that rested on their heads. It was tongues like fire. The appearance of fire moved from one disciple to the next, like flames spreading from one branch to another in a fireplace - or in a forest fire.

In Exodus 3, a burning bush symbolized for Moses the presence of God. Over and over again, fire is used in the Bible as a symbol of purifying judgment.<sup>7</sup> A pillar of fire led the Israelites throughout their forty years of wilderness wanderings. Fire speaks of passion and zeal.

The Holy Spirit's arrival by fire is a promise of the experienced presence of God. Fire speaks of His active leadership and direction, His convicting and purifying power, and the passion He instills in the hearts of those He indwells.

And then, while the sound of the rushing wind coupled with the vision of flames dancing from head to head, the Holy Spirit gave each of these disciples the capacity to speak with other languages. They spoke in tongues.

*Filled with the Holy Spirit, they all spoke in tongues (v. 4)*

***[Acts 2:4] And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.***

Each of the twelve (don't forget Matthias) apostles was a Galilean whose primary spoken language would have been Aramaic.<sup>8</sup> We don't know from what regions all of the other disciples hailed, although my suspicion is that most of them were from Galilee.

These Galileans would not have been terribly sophisticated people. While it is possible that they spoke passable Greek, the language of commerce of the day, it is doubtful that any of them were great linguists.

But, here they were ALL speaking in foreign tongues - languages they had never learned!

God has always been a communicating God.

<sup>7</sup> In Deuteronomy 4:24, God is called "*a consuming fire.*"

<sup>8</sup> Judas Iscariot had been the only resident of Judea

In the beginning He spoke and the universe was. God was so concerned to communicate His ways to His people that He gave the Jews a written Law and has given to us sixty six books. Jesus is described as *“the WORD become flesh.”* (John 1:14)

And here, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave disciples of Jesus the ability to communicate. It is an *anti-Babel*, reversing what God put in place when mankind rebelled on the plains of Shinar (Genesis 11) so that Jesus’ followers could tell everybody - regardless of language - the good news!

Again, from the beginning, the Holy Spirit has always been active. So, when we talk about the Holy Spirit *“coming with power”* at Pentecost, we don’t mean that He had never done anything before.

But, we do mean that the Holy Spirit displayed His power in new and fresh ways on the Day of Pentecost.

This three-fold audio-visual arrival of the Holy Spirit WAS the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had been promising since the beginning of His ministry (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33), and which He had re-promised before His ascension (Acts 1:5).

And the baptism of the Spirit was not just for the entertainment of the disciples gathered in the Temple! He poured Himself into the lives of the disciples to bring blessing to the world!

### **Onlookers are Intrigued by the Holy Spirit (vv. 5-13)**

*Devout Jews in Jerusalem (v. 5)*

*[2:5] Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.*

These devout men from every nation under heaven had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost.

Centuries earlier, the Jews had been taken away from Jerusalem by military conquest.<sup>9</sup>

And ever since the time there had been freedom to travel back and forth between the land of Israel and the land of captivity, devout Jews had traveled back to Jerusalem for worship three times a year - at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

And this was no small migration, either. Scholars tell us that the population in and around Jerusalem, especially for the two feasts of Passover and Pentecost swelled from its normal 50,000 to a temporary population of over one million during the festivals. Many of the pilgrims who came during Passover simply stayed the intervening fifty days to observe Pentecost, too.

The multitude that had gathered and was milling around in the city became aware of the Spirit’s work - perhaps they heard the sound of the rushing wind or the disciples speaking different languages or they saw the *“tongues as of fire”* - and came running to see what in the world was happening.

*Devout - and bewildered - Jews in Jerusalem! (vv. 6-11)*

What was happening was that God had turned on a siren to bring the people together. I love the words that Luke uses to draw attention to how these phenomena affected them. They were *“bewildered....amazed”* and *“astonished.”*

Listen to what they have to say.

*[2:7]...“Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? [8] And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?”*

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<sup>9</sup> First, they were deported by the Assyrians in the 8th century BC, and then by the Babylonians in the 6th century BC.

***[9] Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, [10] Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, [11] Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”<sup>10</sup>***

The geography represented by this list reaches into Asia, Africa, Asia Minor, and Europe and represents much of what was known of the western world.<sup>11</sup>

Everyone present heard the disciples speaking in his own language.<sup>12</sup> (Because of that, some have understood Pentecost to be a miracle of hearing. But that is not the way we should understand it. No supernatural activity was required to understand the languages. It was a miracle of SPEAKING.)

Different disciples were actually speaking different foreign languages so that each person present could hear the message of Jesus in his or her own tongue.

There were a couple of very different responses from the crowds to the tongues-speaking disciples.

*Some marvel; some scoff (vv. 12-13)*

Some were genuinely perplexed. They were confused, but curious.

***[Acts 2:12] And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”***

<sup>10</sup> The disciples were not preaching the Gospel, per se, but were praising and worshipping God. It is not unlikely, though, that they were singing the praises of Jesus.

<sup>11</sup> Parthia, Media, Elam and Mesopotamia represented the dispersion from the 7th and 8th centuries BC under the Assyrians. “Judea” probably implied all the land once controlled by David and Solomon at the height of the monarchy, including the land toward Egypt and Syria to the north. The presence of Romans may explain the obscure origins of the church in Rome.

<sup>12</sup> The list from which the people had come to the feast is about as impressive as the Table of Nations found in Genesis 10. In fact, the parallel with the Table of Nations don’t end with geography, because this event in Acts 2 is a reversal of the curse of Babel, authored by the Holy Spirit Himself!

They didn’t know what was happening, but they were willing to reserve judgment until they had all the data they needed to evaluate.

Others were immediately skeptical and sarcastic.

***[Acts 2:13] But others were mocking and saying, “They are full of sweet wine.”***

There is no monolithic response from the crowd. It is as we would expect. Some are drawn to the strange happenings and want to find out more about it. Some are repulsed by it. Some are hopeful that this is God at work. Some are positive that it’s not.

To sum up this scene, there is noise like a tornado, flames spreading like wildfire, and disciples speaking in tongues all over the place. Onlookers are gripped by perplexity, amazement, bewilderment, and astonishment.

Order is needed!

And how is order going to be brought about? Who’s going to bring order? The followers of Jesus know exactly what is going on. It’s what they’ve been praying about for ten days. It’s what Jesus said would happen. One of the apostles of Jesus needs to take charge. Who’s it going to be?

Well, I’ll tell you who it’s NOT going to be. Based on observable behavior prior to the death of Jesus, the one apostle who is LEAST likely to step forward and boldly proclaim Christ on the Day of Pentecost is Simon Peter!

During the days of Jesus’ earthly ministry, it was always Peter who spoke up - even when he didn’t know quite what to say.

But the last time Peter had been asked to publicly identify himself with Jesus, he publicly denied even knowing the Lord three times. Peter, the Rock (“Rocky”), was the one who had failed so miserably on the night of Jesus’ trials. Maybe he should have been replaced along with Judas Iscariot...

But Peter wasn’t replaced. He was restored.

And who steps up to the mic on the Day of Pentecost : Simon Peter.

I take special comfort in watching Peter bring order to the wonderful chaos of the Day of Pentecost. I rejoice that God takes special delight in restoring those who have failed. He patches us up and puts us back together - and then sends us back onto the battlefield.

And for every Simon Peter here today, to every soldier who has messed up and failed, here is God's word to you: He wants you back in the thick of things.

He intends that you be on the pointy end of the sword, mixing it up with the forces of evil and landing blows for Jesus. Failure isn't fatal for the child of God. Look at the way God dealt with Simon Peter! He used him again. And if you have failed, know that He wants to use you, too!

On the Day of Pentecost, Simon Peter was the recognized "go to" guy. He was the one the others looked to when it was "crunch time," the one everybody wanted taking the last shot as the clock wound down.

So, standing with the other eleven apostles - and a hundred more disciples behind him! - Peter took the situation in hand and with strength, courage and wisdom delivered the sermon of a lifetime.

### **Simon Peter's Life-Changing Message (vv. 14-41)**

#### **A BAPTIZED Simon Peter Preaches With Power (vv. 14-36)**

*Peter defends the disciples' behavior (vv. 14-21)*

"Not as you suppose are we drunk!"<sup>13</sup>

***[2:14] But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. [15] "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day;***

There is a light heartedness to Peter's denial of being drunk. *"You think we're drunk? Yeah, right - at nine in the morning. Well, not as you suppose are we drunk..."*

The way he answers the charge of public intoxication is interesting, because he sort of allows the thinking, *"You're right. We're not quite ourselves this morning. We are being controlled by a foreign substance. But, that substance isn't fresh wine. It is the Holy Spirit of God!"*

That was just the opening shot. Peter cleared his throat and kept speaking.

"This is just what the prophet Joel predicted..."<sup>14</sup>

No doubt something marvelous was happening. Actually, the entire fifty day period preceding the Day of Pentecost had been pretty amazing!

And on this day, over one hundred people were praising God in languages they had never learned. The crowds all heard the sound of a rushing wind. They saw the appearance of tongues as of fire.

Seven weeks earlier, on the day that Jesus was crucified, the sun had been darkened in the middle of the day.

Peter says that **THIS** (what they had experienced and were experiencing) is **THAT** (what Joel predicted).

***[2:16] but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:***<sup>15</sup>

***[17] 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says,  
'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind;  
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
And your young men shall see visions,  
And your old men shall dream dreams;***<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly enough, in the immediately preceding context, Joel remarks that the Lord would visit His people and live in their midst.

<sup>15</sup> Joel 2:28-32

<sup>16</sup> For some reason, Peter/Luke reverses the order of "young men will see visions" and "old men will dream dreams."

<sup>13</sup> So Ray Stedman's translation in his commentary.

***[18] Even on My bondslaves, both men and women,  
I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit  
And they shall prophesy.<sup>17</sup>***

***[19] ‘And I will grant wonders in the sky above  
And signs on the earth below,  
Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.***

***[20] ‘The sun will be turned into darkness  
And the moon into blood,***

***Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.***

***[21] ‘And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will  
be saved.’<sup>18</sup>***

Up to this point, not one of the thousands of Jews listening would have had a problem with anything Peter was saying.

It would have appeared to be a very orthodox presentation of Joel’s prophecy, and a reasonable explanation of the miracles they were witnessing - “*Yep. This does look just like Joel’s prophecy coming true.*”

But then Peter meddled. He stepped on toes. He turned his exposition of Joel’s prophecy into a message about Jesus.

*Peter preached Jesus (vv. 22-36)*

Jesus’ miracles - uncontested (vv. 22)

***[Acts 2:22] “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—***

Now, do you think Peter would have gotten away with that comment if Jesus had NOT performed miracles? No way! Yet not one word of protest was raised.

<sup>17</sup> This line is not in the Old Testament passage.

<sup>18</sup> Peter/Luke quotes from the Septuagint version (a Greek translation of the original Hebrew), and does not translate directly from the Hebrew.

No one stepped forward to suggest that Peter was mistaken, that Jesus had not performed those works of power. Peter’s claims about Jesus were left unchallenged because everybody there knew that Jesus HAD performed miracles.

Jesus’ crucifixion - uncontested (v. 3)

Then Peter reminded His audience - those witnesses of Christ’s power - that they had been responsible for Jesus’ death. He lumped them together with the Romans when he said, ***[Acts 2:23] this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God,<sup>19</sup> you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.***

When Peter stated that his audience was responsible, no one contradicted him - because everybody remembered, “*Yes, we had yelled out, “Crucify Him!” on that Friday afternoon, fifty days ago.*”

Jesus’ resurrection - uncontested (vv. 25-35)

Peter continued.

***[2:24] “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.***

And when Peter claimed that Jesus had been raised from the dead, no one yelled out, “*Not true!*” - because everybody knew the overwhelming evidence for His resurrection.

Earlier, Peter had brought in the prophet Joel to testify about the events of Pentecost. Now he brings King David in to testify of Jesus’ power over the grave!

***[25] “For David says of Him,  
‘I saw the Lord always in my presence;  
For He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken.  
[26] ‘Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted;  
Moreover my flesh also will live in hope;***

<sup>19</sup> The death of Jesus was not an accident and it wasn’t something outside of God’s plan.

*[27] Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades,  
Nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.*

*[28] ‘You have made known to me the ways of life;  
You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.’*

*[29] “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. [30] And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, [31] he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. [32] This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. [33] Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. [34] For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:*

*‘The Lord said to my Lord,*

*“Sit at My right hand,*

*[35] Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.””*

Peter’s point here is that his audience knew that David was buried, and that David’s body had decayed in the tomb.<sup>20</sup> But Jesus’ body had not decayed. He was resurrected.

And this Jesus, whom God raised up, was not only raised from the dead. He had been exalted to the right hand of God!<sup>21</sup>

Peter explained that the Pentecost happenings were God’s validation of Jesus’ ministry. And he reserved the punchline of his sermon for the very end.

<sup>20</sup> David’s tomb was a topic of some notoriety among the populace of Jerusalem, having been raided by John Hyrcanus in 135 BC. Later, Herod built a monument of white marble at the entrance to the tomb.

<sup>21</sup> This was a claim that had shocked the Jewish Sanhedrin senseless less than two months earlier when Jesus said of Himself, *[Luke 22:69] “But from now on THE Son of Man will be SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power of God.”*

*Peter’s punchline: The Jesus YOU crucified is LORD and Messiah! (v. 36)*

*[Acts 2:36] “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

*“You guys put to death the son of God, the Messiah, the Lord (Yahweh) of Joel 2! You crucified David’s greater Son!”*

Peter aimed straight for the heart, straight for the conscience. Those listening had a choice as to what they were going to do with the truth as it had just been presented to them.

Would they resist, or would they submit? Would they get belligerent or would they break? Would they stiffen their necks or would they soften?<sup>22</sup>

Listen.

### **A CONVICTED Multitude Responds (vv. 37-41)**

*The crowd: We were wrong! (v. 37)*

*[Acts 2:37] Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”*

As Peter preached the truth of God, the eyes of his listeners were opened. They saw themselves for who they were and their actions for what they had been.

They saw that Jesus was Lord and Christ. Therefore, they saw that they were guilty of the most heinous sin imaginable. Hence, their question. *“What shall we do? Is there anything we can do? Is there any hope for us?!”*

Peter’s response was clear and to the point.

<sup>22</sup> Leo Tolstoy said that the conflict between life and conscience can be resolved by either changing our lives or changing our conscience.

*Peter: Here's what to do (vv. 38-40)*

***[Acts 2:38] Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."***

This formula Peter used to explain the plan of salvation may strike you as unusual. But it was perfectly appropriate given the audience he was addressing.

### Repent!

As you may know, I don't often use the word "repent" when I present the Gospel. That is because to many people, the idea behind the word "repent" is that before someone is eternally saved, they have to do some life clean-up and engage in some moral improvement projects.

Nothing of the sort is required for salvation. As the song goes, Jesus calls us to come, "*just as we are.*"

We come to Jesus with nothing but need and trust in Him for grace and mercy. Good works are to follow, of course, but they are not required for salvation. We are saved by grace through faith, not of works! (see Ephesians 2:8-9)

However, properly understood *repentance* does have a place in evangelism - as it certainly did in Acts 2.

The Jews living in Jerusalem had a certain opinion about Jesus. They believed that He was a **criminal** under the Roman system and a **blasphemer** under Jewish law.

On the Day of Pentecost they became convinced that He was neither! He was, rather, the Holy Son of God and the Messiah.

When someone's opinion about Jesus needs to change, that act of change is properly called "repentance." When a person's whole life orientation needs to do a "180" from trusting self to trusting Jesus for salvation, that act of turning is properly called "repentance."

These Jews had formerly looked on Jesus as an object of contempt. Now, Peter says that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

When it came to Jesus, these guys needed a complete "about face."

They needed to embrace Him as the Lord, the "I AM" (Yahweh!) of the Old Testament, and as the Messiah, who alone could deliver those who entrusted themselves to Him. THAT was their repentance.

### Be baptized!

And Peter further required water BAPTISM. We might have thought that with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, there would be no more water baptisms. Not so!

While baptism by the Holy Spirit was an internal work, Peter required of these Jews the rite of water baptism (Spirit baptism's outward token) - not to save them - but to demonstrate that they had truly repented/placed their trust in Jesus!

Notice, too, that he did not promise them that when they repented/trusted, they would receive the signs and symbols of the Holy Spirit. And, in fact, there is no evidence that when these placed their faith in Jesus there was the sound of wind, tongues as of fire, or the ability to speak in a foreign language.

Peter promised this crowd listening to him something else, something better than the signs the Holy Spirit might give. He promised them the Holy Spirit Himself!

And he kept after them to turn, turn, turn!

***[2:40] And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"***<sup>23</sup>

And how did they respond to the first Gospel invitation ever given?

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<sup>23</sup> Here is the balance to the comment, "*as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.*" The human will is involved in conversion, as is evidenced by Peter's exhortation to be saved from this evil generation.

Well, Jesus once said that the angels of God rejoiced over the salvation of one sinner. So you can bet that the angels were throwing quite a party on the Day of Pentecost!

*Thousands come to Jesus (v. 41)*

**[Acts 2:41] So then, those who had received his word were baptized;<sup>24</sup> and that day there were added about three thousand souls.**

We are never told how many people were actually in the crowd all together. But, out of the total crowd, three thousand people repented of their previous thinking about Jesus and came to believe that He was the Lord and Messiah.

Three thousand placed their trust in Jesus. Three thousand submitted to baptism to publicly identify with Jesus.

Can you even begin to imagine the hubbub that filled the city when three thousand people openly identified with the recently crucified Jesus!?

It turned the city upside down. The Jesus the religious rulers had worked so hard to be rid of and whose crucifixion they had orchestrated, was now having more influence DEAD than He had while ALIVE!<sup>25</sup>

And what does Luke say about these people who had trusted in Jesus? He says that they **“were added.”** That’s interesting. Added to what? They were added to that which is the point of the book of Acts. They were added to the church.

The church of Jesus Christ began when the Holy Spirit baptized 120 people and then grew to 3,000 souls by the end of the day.

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<sup>24</sup> “It would be a mistake to link the words, **“for the forgiveness of sins”** with the command **“be baptized”** to the exclusion of the prior command to repent. It is against the whole thrust of biblical revelation to suppose that the outward rite could have any value except insofar as it was accompanied by the work of grace within.” (F.F. Bruce)

<sup>25</sup> Through the apostolic witness Jesus acquired more followers in one day than in the whole of His public ministry. This seems to me to be part of what the Lord meant when He said, **[John 14:12] “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”**

And, it is the life of the church, birthed by the power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost that is the theme of the book of Acts.

### **Conclusion:**

The miracles of Pentecost foreshadowed the pattern that the life of the church would take as the Holy Spirit arrived by **WIND, FIRE, and WORD.**

He still works in our lives through **WIND** (*mystery, invisible power and dynamic action*), **FIRE** (*passion and zeal and purifier*) and **WORD** (*bold witness*)!

**WIND is invisible power.** Wind has a very visible effect, but you can’t tell where it comes from and you don’t know where it is going. There is mystery to wind and there is mystery to God and there is a mysterious unpredictability about the one who follows the lead of the Spirit.

**FIRE is passion.** It is a holy purifier that burns with passion and zeal. When John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, he meant that there would be an unexplainable passion about the church and the people who are a part of it.

**WORD is communication.** The tongue shouts the praises of God, explains the message of God, whispers the love of God, and calls for others to respond to God. The church and the people in it are indwelt by the Holy Spirit to become bold and articulate witnesses for Jesus.

Ever since the Day of Pentecost, every Christian and every church has measured its effectiveness and its faithfulness by its willingness to follow the Spirit’s lead, by its passion and zeal for God, and by the boldness of its witness.

## APPENDIX: An Apostolic Replacement

There is a significant parenthetical section immediately after the reference to *“the prayer.”* Luke tells about the disciples’ decision to choose someone to take the place of Judas Iscariot as an apostle.

*[1:15] At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, [16] “Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. [17] “For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.”*

Taken with the account we have in the Gospels, we understand that after he betrayed Jesus, Judas was filled with remorse.<sup>26</sup> He went and hanged himself and, in committing suicide, suffered the messy end we read here in Acts - *[1:18]...falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out.”*

With Judas gone, the apostles who were left came to the conclusion that they needed to replace him<sup>27</sup> and maintain the same number of apostles that Jesus had originally chosen.<sup>28</sup>

So, they chose another apostle by “casting lots.”<sup>29</sup> (or, as The Message reads, *“they then drew straws.”*)

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<sup>26</sup> It has been suggested by some that he had hopes of creating a comfortable nest egg for the time when Jesus set up the Kingdom in Jerusalem. While possible, this is obviously pure speculation. Nor is it likely that he bought the field with the money he was paid to betray Christ. Rather, it is most likely that he purchased it with money he had pilfered from the apostolic treasury over three years of being the treasurer.

<sup>27</sup> The verses Peter quotes from Psalms (69:25 and 109:8) prove that Judas’ position had to be filled.

<sup>28</sup> Although, clearly they didn’t select a new apostle every time one of the original twelve died! Judas’ case was different, disqualified as he had been from the apostolate by death AND defection.

<sup>29</sup> *“The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly from the Lord.”* (Proverbs 16:33)

Two men, Matthias and Joseph, met the criteria Peter outlined in verses 21-22 for serving as an official apostle. First, they had to have been with Jesus during His three year ministry. Second, they had to have seen the resurrected Lord.

The lots were cast<sup>30</sup> with a wholehearted trust that God would bless either of the choices. Matthias was chosen and he became the 12th apostle.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The Jewish method of casting lots consisted of placing stones with names inscribed on them into a jar, and then shaking the jar until one stone came out.

<sup>31</sup> Later church tradition tells of Matthias serving as a missionary to the Ethiopians.