

## **Spreading Fire: The Mission Begins**

### **Acts 2:1-21**

Luke describes 3 phenomena associated with the coming of the Spirit: wind, fire and tongues. We will look at each and then the message Peter starts to proclaim.

#### **The Power that Changes**

The disciples describe something like a mighty wind filling the house. It is a picture of great power. The change that comes over Peter from his denial to being willing to stand before thousands is a vivid example of the transforming power of the Spirit.

But Peter isn't the only one who needs change and transformation: we all do. However, whilst our culture tells us we can change ourselves, the Bible says we are not the solution, but the problem. Instead God gives us his power to change.

#### **The Presence of God**

In the Old Testament fire was associated with the presence of God. The extraordinary thing about Pentecost is that God's presence comes to everyone in the room – the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that Peter quotes. It is this indwelling of the Spirit – the presence of God in our lives – that begins the transformation that we all need. He does this by applying the gospel – all that Jesus is and has done for us, to our hearts: he tells us that we are loved by God (Rom 5:5), that we are God's beloved child (Rom 8:16), and by changing us to be more like Jesus (Gal 5:22-23).

But he also causes worship (Eph 5:19) and prayer (Rom 8:26) to rise up from our hearts; and he gives us gifts to build up his church, just as Peter does here at Pentecost.

#### **Unraveling the Curse**

The timing of Pentecost is perfect, with so many pilgrims from all over the world, the gospel is seeded across the world through the gift of these foreign languages. But there is something else here as well: it is the unraveling of the curse of Babel.

Babel tells the story of how man, in trying to become God, was divided by language. Pentecost tells us how God comes down in His Spirit, and through every man's language, draws people back to himself.

#### **A Message of Joy**

As well as a festival of harvest, Pentecost was a celebration of the giving of the Law. But how different the response to the Law – fear and terror, and the message of this Pentecost – joy as if drunk, are! The Law leaves us in despair at our failure, and terror at the prospect of judgement. But the gospel tells us Jesus has perfectly kept the law and borne the punishment of separation from God that we deserve. When the Spirit speaks that message to our hearts it is a message of joy for us, and a message of joy to be taken out into the world.