

Acts 2 Pentecost Questions and Answers

Verse 1

- a. How did the Jews celebrate the day of Pentecost?

Pentecost comes from the Greek term for fifty days. Shavot in Hebrew was the beginning of the Feast of Weeks or Feast of Booths for the Jews celebrating the beginning of the wheat harvest but also commemorating the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mt Sinai to Moses.

In the Anglican church it is called Whitsun (White Day) for the white gowns worn by people receiving baptism. This day is seen as the day of harvest for the church when 3000 people repented and were baptized in Jerusalem and added to the church. The Holy Spirit came and filled the disciples in the upper room with power and spiritual gifts.

- b. Who do you think "they" refers to?

This was the first day of the week when Jesus' disciples - perhaps the 120+ people gathered perhaps in the Upper Room to pray and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus which had happened 7 weeks earlier on the first day of the week.

Verse 2

- a. How would you feel if you suddenly heard a sound like a violent wind filling the room?

I think I would be very surprised and for a moment shocked. Like those who have met God and His messengers in visions, angels and voices, I think I would be so filled with awe that I would fall on my knees or face and worship.

- b. Why do you think God used this sound - is there any significance to this sound?

In the beginning, Genesis 1:2 says that the "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." Like in the beginning of the world, so in the beginning of the church, the Holy Spirit of God was hovering or moving to begin something new. God brought a new creation in the creation of the church. The word for wind in Hebrew is 'ruach' which is also the term used for the Spirit.

The sound attracted the attention of people in Jerusalem.

Verse 3

- a. What did they see?

The people saw what looked like tongues of fire which from the description sounds like it came from a common source and split like a lightning bolt flashing across the sky.

- b. What did the tongues of fire represent?

The fire represented the Holy Spirit who filled them. The word tongue in Greek is "glossa" which means the tongue that is in your mouth but also this same word is used for language in verse 4. The main trunk of the fire was being spread out to individuals as they were given the ability to spread the message of God in the languages of the world. This is a reversal of the Tower of Babel where languages divided people now the word of God was being communicated to all people to unite them in Jesus as Saviour.

c. On whom did the tongues of fire rest?

These tongues of fire came to rest on each of them - not just the 12 but on all 120 who were gathered there. There were men and women, young and old in the group that had been meeting waiting for the Holy Spirit.

Verse 4

a. What happened after they received the tongues of fire?

It says that all of them were filled with Holy Spirit. This the “anartherous” use of Holy Spirit. The definite article is missing in this expression so literally it reads “were filled all of spirit holy”. (see Acts 1:8) To say it better in English “All were filled (passive voice) of a Holy Spirit.”

As the Spirit gave them the ability, they were able to speak languages which they had not learnt so that they communicated the message of Jesus’s death and resurrection in the languages of the people who were living or visiting Jerusalem from many parts of the world for Pentecost and Feast of Weeks.

b. Do you think the disciples anticipated what the Spirit would do through them? How does this compare to I Corinthians 12:11

I do not think the disciples knew what would happen. They had never experienced anything like this during the ministry of Jesus. They had experienced miracles of healing, demons being cast out, and God’s provision for their needs in their ministry with Jesus. This new experience of speaking in other languages emphasizes the command Jesus made in Acts 1:8 that they would be witnesses to the world. Paul wrote that it was the Holy Spirit that determines the gifts which He empowers us to receive.

Verse 5

a. Who had come to Jerusalem?

The Jews celebrated three major festivals each year in Jerusalem and brought sin offerings, wave offerings, and tithes. The term “God-fearing” was used for those who recognized the God of the Jews, but were not direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Jewish descent) They had become Jews through conversion and worshipped the God of the Torah. They had come from many places in the Mediterranean, Ethiopia and countries surrounding Egypt and from the east as far as India and Arabia.

b. Why do you think God chose this time to pour out His Spirit?

Since so many people had come from around the then known world to worship the true God, if they received the message of Jesus, they could go back to their home countries and bring the message of Jesus with them.

Verse 6

a. What attracted the crowds?

The sound of the violent wind brought the people outdoors to find out what the sound was all about. The local TV station did not exist so people had to go to find out what was going on and do the social media thing.

b. Why were they bewildered, confounded, confused?

The term “bewildered” is used 5 times in the book of Acts. Acts 2:6; 9:22; 19:32; 21:27 and 21:31 with groups in a state of uproar and confusion. If you were in a strange community in a distant land and heard people talking clearly in your language from people who did not look like you or you had no idea of how they might have learnt your language, you too would probably be surprised. They were trying to make sense of the mighty rushing wind which they had heard.

c. What was the purpose of Jesus many disciples being able to speak in other languages?

They were to tell others about Jesus. The gift of languages is to tell others about Jesus. Do you have a mother tongue or second language that you can use to tell others that speak that language about Jesus? Are you using it to communicate God's love and the salvation Jesus offers to those who do not believe?

Verse 7

a. Why was the crowd surprised that the Galileans could speak their language?

Galileans were not the educated people of the day. They were considered somewhat backward, plain country folks.

Verse 8-11

a. What kind of languages were spoken?

People who came from different areas of the then known world - Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome, Cretans and Arabs

b. Locate these countries on a map?



c. What did they hear the disciples declare?

They heard the disciples declaring the wonders of God in their own language.

d. What wonders of God would they have been talking about?

The greatest wonder was not the Holy Spirit filling them but the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus died for the sins of people. He became the lamb of God who took away their sins. He cleanses us, forgives

us, makes us right with God and builds a place for us in heaven.

e. What wonders of God have you experienced in your life or heard about?

Jesus forgave my sins!!!! I have no fear of death and look forward to Christ's return or the resurrection of the dead. I have seen God heal the sick, restore relationships, transform individuals who were struggling with addictions. I have seen Jesus forgive the worst sins and habits. I have enjoyed God's creation and the more I study science and its intricacies and complexities, I am even more convinced that nothing like that could have happened by chance or evolved. Impossible made possible with God's word.

Verse 12

a. What question came to the minds of people who were visiting Jerusalem?

What does the message of Jesus who died as our substitute for our sins to become holy before God really mean? How could someone speak to me about God in my language who has never learnt it? Who is this Jesus they are talking about? What did He do?

b. Have you ever asked the question "What does this mean?"

What they were hearing was different to what they had been taught. They were religious people. Now the disciples were telling them. To become holy, I don't need to follow hundreds of laws. If one law, the law of love and forgiveness is embraced, I don't need to try to follow the others, they will automatically become a part of my life.

Verse 13

a. How did some people interpret this phenomena?

Some mocked the disciples by saying they had drunk too much already. Since this was the Festival of First Fruits some of the early grapes may have ripened. This was not normal and for some it sounded like babbling since they could not understand the languages being spoke. I am sure that groups of people with the same language began to congregate around those who spoke their language.

b. What do you think your response might have been if you had been there?

It certainly would have been intriguing. Having spent years trying to master Japanese, certainly being able to speak it immediately would be a gift of magnanimous proportions.

Verse 14

a. Who got up to try to clarify the situation?

Peter stood up with the other apostles and spoke out. Peter was a hardy fisherman who probably had a good loud voice to speak to a crowd of 3000 without mikes and amps. This is similar to Ezra with priests at dedication of the walls of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah.

b. Who was he speaking to?

We don't know if the speaking in foreign languages ceased but Peter would have been speaking in Aramaic to his fellow Jews. The text says he was speaking to the people of Judea and those living in

Jerusalem. Try to imagine the scene. Hundreds of people crowded into the streets. We don't know if he spoke from the Upper Room something like when the Pope speaks to the crowds in the Vatican.

Verse 15

a. What time do you think the followers of Jesus got together for Pentecost?

They may have slept together or had an all night prayer meeting. This event occurred at the third hour. Day began at 6 am when the sun came up in Jerusalem. The third hour would make it 9 am. We believe that they had been together waiting for the promise of the Spirit. Are you waiting and praying for the Spirit to fill you and empower you? How serious are you about that?

b. What would think about getting together that early for a prayer meeting? What does that say about our commitment to our Christian life?

Many people are up and busy at 6 am. People who are industrious and influential are early risers and get a lot of work done even before the average person is up and getting their first coffee. What is the first thing you do in the morning? Are you engaged in prayer and your relationship with Jesus? How serious are we experiencing the fullness of Jesus?

c. What was Peter's first clarification?

What you are experiencing is not because these people are drunk. There appeared to be some similarity with the exuberance, excitement and joy expressed by those who have been drinking and those filled with God's Spirit. Ephesians 5: 18 says we should not be drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit.

Verse 16

a. Who is Peter quoting in verse 16?

The Jews in Jesus time saw many of the prophetic words in the Old Testament writings as being fulfilled in their time. This gives credence that the book of Joel was seen as scripture by the Jewish community in the first century and why it is included in the canon of the Bible today.

b. How does Peter interpret this event?

In Chapter 2 of Joel God is calling for renewal. Peter sees parallels between the time when Joel was ministering in Judea with his time and that "these were the last days." (read from Joel 2 to get the context of this passage that Peter is quoting.)

Verse 17- 18

a. What did God promise to do?

Speaking through Joel, God promised to pour out His Spirit on all people. It was not just the Jews but the whole world. Jesus expanded the faith circle to include all the people in the world. Jews saw themselves as God's people but failed to invite others into their community. How inclusive and inviting have you been? Invite someone to share your Bible Study.

b. Do you think this is still happening today or is that prophecy completely fulfilled?

A prophet has two functions in the Old Testament. One was to warn the people of what God had said and second to declare God's message on future events. The first is continuously done by preachers today but as we see in the Old Testament prophets there were very few times when someone foretold what God might do in the future. Both men and women declare God's judgement and message of hope in Bible Studies, witnessing and in communicating God's truths.

I think that young men are still seeing visions and older people are seeing God in dreams and declaring God's wonderful works.

Verse 19 - 20

What events have yet to occur before the coming of the Lord?

The prophecy of Joel was not completely filled. Perhaps we could see the violent sound of rushing wind a wonder in the sky but the other events Peter quotes from Joel have not come yet to our knowledge. Some see the Blood Moons seen in the United States (check internet for details) are a fulfilment of this prophecy and that Jesus is returning soon.

Verse 21

a. What will happen to those who call on the name of the Lord?

All who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.

b. What are we saved from?

We are saved from damnation (hell) and will be given a place in Heaven. We will be saved from our sins if we ask Jesus to become our sin offering. Jesus will send the Holy Spirit to each one who calls on His Name and we will be filled with joy and understanding.

Verse 22

a. What proved that Jesus was the promised Messiah?

God performed miracles, wonders and signs though Jesus while he was on earth.

b. What were some of the miracles, wonders and signs that Jesus did?

The gospels are full of miracles which Jesus did. Jesus brought people back from the dead, healed lepers, gave sight to the blind, restored hearing, healed many diseased individuals and freed people from power of the demonic.

c. What was the source of Christ's power to do these things?

This verse says that "God performed them through Him in your midst". If we see God at work through us recognize that it is not us but God doing the miracles and give glory to God.

Verse 23

a. What does Peter claim to be the reason Christ died?

His death was predetermined and God knew about it and did it to put an end to death.

b. Who does Peter identify as being the ones who were responsible for Christ's crucifixion?

Peter says that the Jews were responsible for using godless men (Romans) to put Jesus to death.

Verse 24

What happened to Jesus after he died?

Peter, an eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus, said that God raised Him up. God has power over death because God is the creator and something which He created cannot have more power than the one who created it.

We cannot put together a step by step progression of the events of Jesus' last days on earth but there are events recorded in the gospels and Paul's letters. These include seeing the apostles in the Jerusalem at least 2 times, one with Thomas absent and one when he was present. Jesus also made a breakfast at the sea of Galilee for the disciples. They gathered near Jerusalem with Jesus as he ascended into the sky. These appearances prove that Jesus was raised from the dead and the curse of death that occurred at the time of Adam and Eve's disobedience had been broken. Death no longer had dominion over Jesus and humanity and we can experience eternal life.

Verse 25

Why was David so confident?

Peter is quoting Psalm 16: 8 - 11 and here David says that he is not shaken because the Lord is always before him and at his right hand guiding him. We can be confident because the same Lord that was with David can be with us if we are in right relationship with God.

Verse 26

What were the other benefits David said of having an intimate relationship with God?

David said that his heart was glad and his mouth praised God. David recognized that he had the hope that he would one day be resurrected.

Verse 27 - 28

What prophetic word did Peter use to convince the crowd of Jews that Jesus was risen from the dead?
(Psalms 16: 9b - 11)

David prophesied that the Messiah would not decay in the grave. Sheol in Hebrew or Hades in the Greek has been translated Hell in English but this does not seem to be the place that Jesus talked about being the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth ... (Matthew 8:12, 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28) Some theologians have suggested that this is a temporary abode of the dead until the judgement. What Jesus was describing is the post judgement location of all those rebellious against God (Satan, demons, unbelievers).

With a less than 3 day window, certainly the body of Christ would not decay. All that the visitors to the tomb found was the cloth left to wrap the body of the dead Jesus on that Sunday morning. (First day of the week.) We do not know how long Jesus was in the tomb but we know that by Sunday morning his body was no longer there.

Verse 28

What did David say God would give?

By quoting this Psalm and applying it to Jesus Peter declares that David was saying that there would be new life, that God would restore the relationship with the Father, and Jesus would be physically present with God. We too can experience joy and gladness in the presence of God. God through the presence of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, makes the way of life - the way we are to live our Christian life - known to us.

Verse 29

How did Peter indicate that this verse was not referring to David himself?

At the time that Peter spoke these words, the Jews had identified a tomb where they believed David had been buried. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians and all places of significance were destroyed to break the spirit of the nations that the Babylonians conquered. The current “King David’s Tomb” in Jerusalem was identified and constructed about 1,000 AD about 2,000 years after David was buried. The site is not considered authentic.

Verse 30 - 32

How did Peter interpret these verses from Psalm 16?

Peter saw David as a prophet and that God was giving David a vision that he would have a descendent who would be the anointed, the Messiah and establish the Kingdom of God. David was prophesying that Jesus would be raised from the dead and not left to rot in the grave. It is important to note that Peter was one of the eye witnesses to the empty tomb that first day of the week along with John and several women.

Verse 33

a. Where is Jesus now and what did He receive from the Father?

Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God and has been given authority to direct the Holy Spirit.

b. What occurred after Jesus was given this awesome responsibility?

Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on the people on that day of Pentecost. The effects of the Spirit were seen on the streets of Jerusalem that day. Jesus told the disciples what to expect when He would send the Holy Spirit when they had a conversation the last Supper before his death. (John 13 - 18)

Verse 34

What proof did Peter have to say that Jesus was at the right hand of the Father? Is there a confirmation of this in scripture?

Peter quotes David again this time from Psalm 110:1. David says that the Lord said “Sit at My right hand.” Here Lord is a reference to God the Father. This was one of the Messianic prophesies and Peter clarifies that David is not speaking of himself when he uses the term “my Lord” but this prophesy is fulfilled in Jesus. We get confirmation of this when Stephen is being stoned in Acts 7:55 - 56 where he declared that he saw “the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” There are a number of other references of Jesus sitting at the right hand of God in the New Testament.

Verse 35

How long was Jesus to remain at the right hand of the Father?

This verse says that Jesus was to be there until God the Father would make Jesus' enemies a footstool for His feet.””

Verse 36

a. What did Peter declare that God had done for Jesus?

He had made Him both Lord and Christ. Lord is the term for master - the one in control.

Christ is the term used for Anointed One in the Greek. In the Old Testament the term Messiah refers to this person. Both the priest and kings were anointed. Jesus fulfilled both functions as the intercessor between the Father and people and He is the king of the Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God.

b. To make sure they understood who Peter was talking about what accusation did Peter make regarding Jesus?

Peter accuses those present as the ones who had crucified Jesus. We do not know who had come to see the outpouring of the Spirit but perhaps there were a number of religious leaders in the group. Also, the citizens of Jerusalem and some of the visitors who had come for the Feast of Weeks and the Passover previously, where present and asking for the crucifixion of Jesus. They had been convinced by religious leaders that Jesus was a blasphemer and needed to be killed. Peter showed the crowd that scripture was fulfilled in Jesus.

Verse 37

Why do you think that Peter's message pierced their hearts?

The Holy Spirit was at work convicting them of their sin. They may have finally recognized the fact that Jesus was God and that He had died for their sin. They recognized that the prophesy of David their beloved king and prophet had come true and they had missed Jesus as Lord and King. Now they were trying to make up for their mistakes.

Verse 38

What did Peter say to do?

They were to repent of their sin of killing the Son of God or not recognizing that God has sent Jesus into the world to become the sacrifice for their sins. Peter said that if they repented of their sins and were forgiven of their sins they should be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. If they did this they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit which they had seen the disciples of Jesus experience.

Verse 39

a. Who was this promise of the Holy Spirit for?

Not only would the people present but all who God called would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, both those present and any in the future who confessed their sin and were forgiven.

b. Have you repented, been baptized and received the Holy Spirit? If not is there anything stopping you from doing that right now?

Verse 40

a. What else did Peter say that day?

He testified about Jesus and exhorted them to turn from their wicked ways and be saved. Peter called the people of his day perverse.

b. Could we call our generation perverse? What does that mean?

Looking on line we find a definition of perverse as

“1a : turned away from what is right or good : corrupt. b : improper, incorrect. c : contrary to the evidence or the direction of the judge on a point of law perverse verdict. 2a : obstinate in opposing what is right, reasonable, or accepted : wrongheaded.”

Verse 41

How many accepted Peter’s message and followed through with what Peter exhorted them to do?

There were 3,000 people who were baptized that day and added to the group of believers in Jesus.

Verse 42

What did those who believed in Jesus and became a part of those following the teachings of Jesus doing?

1. They were devoting themselves to listening to the teaching of the apostles. The apostles would be teaching what Jesus had taught them during the 3 years that they were with Him.
2. They were getting together in fellowship. That means that they were sharing their lives in mutual discipleship.
3. They were eating together. Breaking bread may mean that they had a common meal together and even remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus in a communion (Eucharist) meal together.
4. They spent time in prayer. They were praising God and asking God to work in their lives and in the lives of people in their community.

Verse 43

a. What was the net effect of the visitation of the Holy Spirit on that day of Pentecost and going forward?

The apostles - here probably referring to the 12 disciple that had followed Jesus for three years - were doing wonders and signs through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8) People were in awe of what God was doing in their midst.

b. Do you have that same sense of awe and wonder at the work of God that is happening today? If not, why not? What can you do to regain a sense of awe at the work of the Holy Spirit?

Verse 44

Why do you think that they shared all their possessions? Is this to be the normal response of people becoming disciples of Jesus?

The people who believed in Jesus were filled with joy, gratitude and love. They were focussed on sharing everything including their heart transformation (witnessing) and their possessions. We cannot take our possessions with us to heaven and God blesses us down here on earth so that we can share the good things which he has blessed us with. We should not be stingy or hanging on tightly to earthly possessions. Some of the people who had become disciples had come from distant lands. We don't know how many hung around after Pentecost and the Feast of Weeks was over. Many would have returned to family but some may have stayed. As a spiritual pilgrim they would not have taken much with them to Jerusalem. They wanted to sit at the disciples' feet learning all that they could about the teaching of Jesus. The early church took care of widows and elderly. They did not have a pension or government that took care of their needs so some people struggled in older years to enjoy a fruitful life. There were heavy taxes but those were sent to Rome to the Emperor.

Verse 46

a. How did the beginning church spend their time?

Day by day - every day, those that lived in Jerusalem, went to the temple to praise God and pray. They broke bread - an expression which has two meanings. One is to eat together like a family would which is what it looks like in the second part of this verse where they eat meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.

The second meaning could be to take communion. Note that they did this in their homes. It was not a ritual that was presided over by a priest or minister. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 talks about the fellowship meal that was enjoyed by the church before communion was taken.

b. How do you spend your time?

Verse 47

What was the result of their praising God?

Many people in Jerusalem saw their sincerity and recognized that Jesus had died for their sins and repented and were baptized. Every day new people were attracted to the homes of those who were believers in Jesus and were saved from their sin, forgiven, cleansed, purified and were given the gift of eternal life in heaven and the gift of the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ. Is there any question as to why they were praising God?