

Acts Bible Study

Class 4 Teacher Notes

Acts Chapter and verse:

--2.1 "When the day of Pentecost had fully come..." Pentecost is "the last Feast, which is also the last of the Feast--Pentecost--which is the end and fulfillment of the preordained promise." (Pentecost Matins)

--2.3 "Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, and one rested upon each of them." This account of Pentecost is extremely important, "for then the fire of the Comforter came down upon the earth in the likeness of tongues, lighting the Disciples and revealing them plainly as initiates of heavenly things." But what significance does this have for us? Because now we can say with full confidence: "Truly, the Light of the Comforter has come and lighted the world" (from the Matins of Pentecost).

--2.4-6 "...And when the sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak **in his own language**" The language that was confounded and the nations that were divided at the tower of Babel as a punishment for them rising together against God (cf. Gen 11.1-9) is now undone. For they are now called to unity, not like the old unity of Babel which yielded the possibility of rebelliousness, but unity of common praise and communion with God. For "the high One descended...and when he distributed the fiery tongues He called all to unity. Therefore in unison we glorify the most Holy Spirit" (Kondakion, Liturgy of Pentecost).

A large part of this unity to which all are called is a comprehension of the Gospel message and the Orthodox Faith each in his own language: So that all might be able to say "We hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God" (2.11), and be added to the Church as were the 3000 souls on that first Pentecost.

The Orthodox Church has historically always adhered to the method that is portrayed here in Acts as presented by the Holy Spirit, that each hear, learn, and participate in his own tongue, that is to say his own language.

--What is the origin of Pentecost? In the Old Testament it was the celebration of the presence of God coming among the Israelites in the giving of the law to Moses, 50 days after the Pesach (Heb.)/Pascha (Gk.) (passover) of Israel. What is the significance of this? Christ came to give the law the first time, but came to give the lawgiver, God the Holy Spirit, at this fulfilled Pentecost, to which the former was an anticipation in type of the latter. The giving of the law indicated the beginning of the nation of Israel, the giving of the Holy Spirit indicated the fulfillment of the type in the Church, which is the complete and true Israel of God.

--"This then is the object of the present Feast, namely, the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world, the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus Christ, and the completion of the undefiled

Disciples' hope. It is the sequel and the conclusion of the Feasts of the great mystery of the Divine Incarnation." (from the Synaxarion of the Feast of Pentecost).

We read that the Apostles, formerly unlearned men were "suddenly instructed by the advent of the Holy Spirit, becoming possessed of the greatest wisdom and speaking plainly of heavenly doctrines." How many times do we quench the Spirit by stifling those in our day who have been instructed by the Spirit? Because we all have distinctive callings within the one body, do not trivialize the ability of God to graduate the one from novice to teacher in one day or even an instant, as He did with St. Paul. For to some it might be a moment, to some days, to some years, and to others still longer. But do not doubt the ability of the Creator of the Universe to impart this knowledge.

--2.41 3000 souls added in one day

--2.42-47 Life of the early Church

--3.6 We are all called to almsgiving in one form or another, to do charitable acts of godly kindness in whatever way we can. There are enumerated many different spiritual and corporal works of mercy in the fathers that fall under the duty of almsgiving.

--3.14-15: "You denied the Holy One...and killed the Prince of Life." This passage is evidence of why we in worship can use phrases like "the murder of God" with reference to the crucifixion of Christ. But it is also why we can use the title "Theotokos" for the Most-holy Virgin, and is very important in support of the 3rd Ecumenical council. For it shows that, though Christ had two natures, he was a single person. It is this person we worship, who is fully God and fully Man. This is why we speak of God being nailed to a tree, even though it was in his humanity and not his divinity that He suffered, because it is one and the same Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is our God.

3.19 "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

3.21 "the times of restoration of all things," the last day, "restoration" referring, according to the Fathers, to the deification of the creation.

3.18,22ff Peter convincing the Jews.

